

“BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS”

CATASTROPHICALLY CONFUSED CALVINISM
(WILL AMERICA DESTEST TO ITS OWN DEMISE?)

A dissertation submitted to the Caspersen School of Graduate
Studies Drew University in partial fulfillment of
The requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Arts and Letters

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Madison, New Jersey

May 2018

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ABSTRACT

“Blest Be the Tie that Binds”
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Calvin never failed to stir controversy; his pen never dipped a second time into the inkwell before issues were raised and battle lines were drawn in the theological sand. His ideas about God and scripture are critiqued and debated among theologians; engaged by historians and sociologists as well as preached by clergy well into the twenty-first century. But with all that scholarly discourse, Calvin’s world-changing influence on western civilization, arguably the real story, seems to go largely unnoticed and unrealized. Yet it shaped the colonies of the new world, framed thinking as the founding fathers authored the Constitution of the United States, affected society’s views about slavery leading into the American Civil War, and today pulls the strings from behind the curtain of culture making science, the arts, academia, the media, entertainment, religion, and the rule of governments all over the world dance, like so many marionettes in a children’s puppet show.

Calvin’s distinctive theological ideas seemed to have a unique propensity to evoke cultural and linguistic absolutes often leading to extremisms in their applications, perhaps in ways that Calvin himself never intended. These distorted extremes created a

sort of cultural rainbow overarching societal skies in Europe, spreading to the United States, and through America's influence, now extend around the world. Yet few bother to look up to take notice of the sociological colors above them, let alone respond to them.

Comprehending the veracity then of such declaratives, will be realized in this treatise by tracing an anthropological lineage of John Calvin's unique view of theology that has been culturally sown into the societal fabric of Europe and even more in the United States; assimilating religion, the economy, politics, government, education, the arts, and the sciences; uncovering his influence in evangelical Christianity, frequently perceived as conflicted, judgmental, condescending, and overbearing by certain secularized segments of society who arguably and ironically spawn their critiques via the same religious Calvinistic extremism they espouse to despise, simply rebranded and masked as non-religious and secular.

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*Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.*

*Before our Father's throne,
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts, and our cares.*

*We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.*

*When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.¹*

¹ John Fawcett, 1782 Public Domain



Unknown Artist, *Jean Calvin*, 1587, *Oil on Canvas* National Portrait Gallery, London, Photo: John Foxe

Preface

With the echo of John Calvin's voice yet reverberating from the walls of St. Pierre's Cathedral in Geneva, Switzerland, it is easy to imagine puzzled expressions on the faces of his parishioners as they struggled internally to come to grips with what they were hearing from the pulpit. Calvin never failed to stir controversy; his pen never dipped a second time into the inkwell before issues were raised and battle lines were drawn in the theological sand.

His ideas about God and scripture are critiqued and debated among theologians; engaged by historians and sociologists as well as preached by clergy well into the twenty-first century. But with all that discourse, Calvin's world-changing influence on western

civilization, arguably the real story, seems to go largely unnoticed and unrealized. Yet it shaped the colonies of the new world, framed thinking as the founding fathers authored the Constitution of the United States, affected society's views about slavery leading into the American Civil War, and today pulls the strings from behind the curtain of culture making science, the arts, academia, the media, entertainment, religion, and the rule of



The Pulpit of St. Pierre's Cathedral, Geneva

governments all over the world dance like so many marionettes in a children's puppet show.

Calvin's distinctive theological ideas seemed to have a unique propensity to evoke cultural and linguistic absolutes often leading to extremisms in their applications, perhaps in ways that Calvin himself never intended. These distorted extremes created a sort of cultural rainbow overarching societal skies in Europe, spreading to the United States, and through America's influence, now extend around the world. Yet few bother to look up to take notice of the sociological colors above them, let alone respond to them. "If history means anything, either as presumed record or as a collective act of mind, then it is worth wondering how the exorcism of so potent a spirit might have been accomplished, and how it is that we have conspired in knowing nothing about an influence so profound as his is always said to have been in our institutions, our very lives, and souls."² Comprehending the veracity then of such declaratives, will be realized in this treatise by tracing an anthropological lineage of John Calvin's unique view of theology that has been culturally sown into the societal fabric of Europe and even more in the United States; assimilating religion, the economy, politics, government, education, the arts, and the sciences; uncovering his influence in evangelical Christianity, frequently perceived as conflicted, judgmental, condescending, and overbearing by certain secularized segments of society who arguably and ironically, spawn their critiques via the same religious Calvinistic extremism they espouse to despise, simply rebranded and masked as non-religious and secular.

² Marilynne Robinson, *The Death of Adam: Essays On Modern Thought* (New York: Picador, 2005), 13.

Calvin's innate talent to motivate through coercion and fear was often far more effective than other Christian theologians' ability to encourage out of love.

Calvin revived the dragon of religious intolerance Luther had sought to slay in Catholicism, namely spiritual salvation (friendship with God) via human action; that is having acceptance from God and getting to heaven by being a good person and doing good deeds. But Calvin had his own definition of goodness. It was gleaned through his theological systematization. This systematization was in contrast to Luther's view that humanity can't do enough to merit absolution from God; hence, the need for faith in Jesus Christ who has already satisfied the demands of divine justice by dying in humanity's place for their shortcomings (sins) and overpowering death, hell, and the grave in his resurrection from the dead. This power of Christ's resurrection means a resurrection for anyone in humanity that believes in it and asks God for it.

For Luther, right standing with God comes from seeing the events of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection in a spiritually revelatory way, (as applying to one's own life) and appreciatively accepting Jesus' kindness to humanity for accomplishing this impossible task, (a personal human response of faith). This is all that is needed for salvation, a simple expression from the heart that says, "Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, that you died for my sins and conquered death so that I don't have to be separated from you. Please save me!" That's it for Luther. In fact, Luther prayed that very prayer in his darkest hour. His prayer was this, "Lord, I'm yours! Save me!" But from what are these theologians, ministers, and priests wanting to be saved?

From drowning, from taxes, from depression? In a manner of speaking, yes! All of these and more. Salvation is a biblical and a theological term that simply means to be *saved* from being separated from God. God is the source of light; in every sense of that word. He is also the originator of life; in every sense of that word as well. He is the originator and progenitor of both.

Jesus compares humanity to bunches of grapes growing in God's spiritual metaphorical vineyard (John 15). He is the *true vine* (inferring there are false ones) to which the branches of humanity are attached. If they become detached they wither and die. So the term "salvation" means more than just "being", a subject to be taken up later with Martin Heidegger. Salvation means to have a gratifying sense of purposeful significance in being. It is "being" embodying both joy and purpose. So then life, as the Bible defines it, is not mere existence. It is hopeful certainty of continuous ecstasy in perpetual communal celebrations of being through cooperative conjoinments of kindness with the transcendent creator. The New Testament book of Ephesians says "that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."³

Jesus' comparison of humankind to his flock of sheep, and his pure motives for safeguarding them as the good shepherd (in contrast to the shepherds that are not good) says it best,

Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and

³ Ephesians 2:7

find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.⁴

Jesus' teaching posits salvation as a reality in the present for individuals who desire it; and he makes it available to all humanity; yet salvation is far more than affording a motif for building world peace; it is also perpetual when time comes to an end and eternity once again wraps "being" in its embrace.

The word "sin" was an expression originally associated with the sport of archery meaning, "to miss the mark". The disobedience of man to God's purposes in creating humanity are a self initiated deviance from God's original programmed behaviors intended to maintain fellowship with him and peace with each other. This self sabotage of prescribed conduct has created a cascading and exponentially growing malfunction of misalignment with God's original design parameters for human conduct resulting in nearly complete system failure. This flawed, and virally self-imposed maleficent software coding, use computer programing semantics, caused the forfeiture of the human privilege of being in Paradise (God's presence and friendship in Eden). Salvation in essence, is a re-acquisition of those privileges; it is a rebooting of human societal systems with the manufacturer's defaults restored.

⁴ John 10:7-10

I

Orientations and Contextualizations

In the wake of Luther's German reformation a young and highly accomplished French lawyer, Jean Cauvin (John Calvin, 1509-1564) experiences a personal and profoundly spiritual awakening of his own giving rise to a movement of Christian spirituality that will literally change the course of western civilization.

Calvin's authorship of the first systematic theological system of consideration, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), a vast and complex process of work envisaged upon a construct of many sound theological principles congruent with biblical teaching, has helped to immortalize Calvin and his ideas. Its seemingly irrefutable logic and near flawless philosophical arguments are constantly engaged and have perpetuated it through its many controversial discourses and concepts for centuries.

But while Calvin's theology may be on biblical bedrock; giving it viability in concert with both Catholic and Lutheran theology, it is shunted, not surprisingly, through Calvin's personal experiences in childhood. He had a very strict father and lived in a city where religious life and civil law were intertwined. These realities, along with his education, coupled with his later acquired experiences in the practice of law will be significantly influential in his intellectual formation prior to his spiritual experience; an event which separates his life into two parts, the before and the after.

Calvin's *experience* with Jesus Christ around 1533 is transformative. He was Catholic all his life and placed on a track for the priesthood by his father. Yet in his own

reading of Luther he has what he calls a *sudden conversion*. “God subdued and brought my heart to docility.”⁵ Calvin’s own words summarize what true salvation spiritually meant to him, “Without the Gospel, we do not know what God requires of us or forbids us to do; we cannot distinguish good from evil, light from darkness, or the commandment of God from the institutions of men. Without the Gospel we are all helpless and ineffectual; without the Gospel we are not Christians.”⁶ However Calvin characterizes his own spiritual awakening, it would propel him down a path to an unimagined destiny. By his mid-twenties he finds himself at the forefront of theology, politics, and religion in Europe. To his dismay, the King of France rejected Calvin’s distinctive ideas and ensuing events found Calvin fleeing France to avoid charges of heresy. But Calvin did not go alone. A significant number of followers went with him.

Finding refuge in a picturesque Swiss village on the shore of Lake Geneva, Calvin founded his own church and over time, his ecclesiastical ideas seeped through the dike of civil law turning Geneva into quite the little theocracy with Calvin cast in the role of God’s oracle.

As time passed, Calvin’s rigid and legalistic origins became a lens through which he understood theology, and more importantly, how he applied it in Geneva. This bend toward systemization and rule, which had accompanying punishments for infractions, overlaid his transformative personal spiritual experience. The overlay is what will be argued to be the beginnings of his oft-deserved demeanor of toughness and intolerance.

His austerity of spirit has always had critics who assert his ideas seem to lack resonance with the teachings of Christ’s love as expressed in the Bible. As Calvin’s

⁵ Tim Dowley, *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, second ed. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2013), 306

⁶ Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, american ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 97.

applied regulation of his very biblical theology is culturally weighed against the balances of love, kindness, patience, and spiritual gracefulness characterizing God in the Bible, it is frequently judged to be found wanting.

Calvin and his Geneva phenomenon might have been nothing more than one more religious extremist with a cult following soon to pass off the scene if it were not for the fact that Calvin did not simply make up the rules as he went. He framed them on theologically sound biblical principles. The same ones believed, esteemed, and applied in Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism alike. In fact, Jonas E. Alexis' 2013 book entitled, *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, Alexis goes so far as to assert that Calvin demonstrates an employed Old Testament justice via Rabbinical Judaism to support his theocracy. While that may be so, it is important to note that Rabbinical Judaism evolved later and apart from the Torah and the prophets in the ensuing period between the Jewish return from Babylonian Captivity and the Rome that occupied Palestine in Jesus' day. Theologians call this four-hundred year span of time the "silence" between the Old Testament and New Testament because unlike prior times, when God spoke through prophets, there seemed to be nothing for four centuries. As there was no manifestation of God's supernatural to affirm or confirm the course and direction of society in Israel, Jewish prominents started taking the wheel and steering a course they thought was best. During this season the famed Maccabean revolt occurred against the Seleucids who invaded Judea and seemed bent on eradicating the world of Judaism. The traditional spiritual rule of the Priesthood of Aaron as per the Torah, became subordinated to the rise of Rabbinical leaders who each interpreted and applied the Torah in their contemporary settings through nationalistic readings. Thus, distinctive sects of Judaism emerged such as the well-known Zealots for one, who with violence, ultimately won their successful revolt.

While one might argue that violence is violence, it must be said that the violence of this period was not initiated by a directive from God as some earlier acts of violence were in the Old Testament. There is an argument, at least theologically, that the recipients of that older divinely sanctioned violence were receiving a just end by a just God and that Israel, as God's chosen people were God's hand bringing about that justice; but whether one understands God's motive or not; or agrees with the veracity of that argument or not, the discussion here is that the violence emanating from the Rabbinical period has no biblical or divine justification. It must further be said, to be fair; that the violence of this time was not advocated by every Rabbinical leader. Just some of them. Very much as Calvin's Christian theology is not interpreted by all his followers to condone violence, only some of its adherents. The Gospel of John has at times, been deemed anti semitic as it speaks of the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day in a derogatory way; but in reality, many of the leaders of the Sanhedrin (the ruling body of Jewish leaders from the diverse sects of Judaism) who condemned Jesus were not all really in their places of leadership in accordance with the law of Moses or Judaism proper; in fact, Herod the king was an Edomite. As both the priesthood and the throne of Israel were determined by lineage, Herod should not have been in power as he was not in the lineage of David. Caiaphas, the acting "High Priest" who condemned Jesus to the cross, had only the slightest blood connection to the Priesthood of Aaron and arguably, may have had no biblical/Jewish right at all to have held that office. John's slant is not meant to be anti-semitic but rather to affirm that Jesus, whose lineage is historically confirmed in the direct line of succession to David's throne, along with his disciples, are the real Jews here. Their derogatory remarks against the "Jewish" leaders are not meant to be anti-Jew but to condemn and expose those that were illegitimate.

Again, it is somewhat confusing as not all, just some of the Jewish leadership were impostors of Judaism. In one conflict with the “Jewish leaders” Jesus told them,

“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”⁷

Alexis’ comments that the teachings of Christ, especially those preached later by the Apostle Paul, “never espoused or promoted (or even remotely suggested) violence against any individuals be they Jew or Gentile.”⁸ This is the crux of the Calvin enigma. Was Calvin as rigid and intolerant as he has been purported to be? How can Calvin claim to make representation of a biblical truth that teaches love, patience, kindness, and acceptance amidst an influence that is harsh, critical, judgmental and obtuse?

These and many similar questions are the basis upon which hundreds of books and papers would be published, either supporting, attacking, or engaging Calvin for the next five hundred years to come.

Calvin’s self-described earlier Catholic religiosity and education, the time before his transformative spiritual experience, led him into a preoccupation with the practice of law. This experience sheds light on how his skills as an orator, litigator, and debater would later be employed so successfully to articulate his theological ideas and prove their validity; often more convincingly than many Catholic or Lutheran scholars could.

⁷ John 5:45-47

⁸ Jonas E. Alexis, *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2013), 143.

Calvin's theology portrayed love and kindness in Christianity as meaningless and disingenuous without accompanying legal adherence to Christ's law. John Hesselink observes Calvin's way of interpreting scripture is predicated on the necessity of comprehending the connection that exists between God and his law. "The law is not only an expression of the will of God, it is the will of God. Hence the law, like the will of god, is a dynamic thing, meaningless apart from the living Lord and the redemptive history of which it is a part."⁹

At face value this description of Calvin's view of God is really no different than Martin Luther's; in fact, a Catholic theologian would likely be in harmony with such a concept. The distinction only begins to be realized when consideration is given as to how Calvin might see God's love working in concert with God's law and how that would look as it played out in real life.

If God's law is God's will, then disobeying the law is disavowing God's will. This may seem minor but it is really quite significant because for Calvin, it actually denotes a rejection of God. One might reject a human idea without making the human that conceived it an enemy; but since God's ideas (his will) are his law, and his law is the portrait of his character and attributes, to reject God's law is the rejection of God himself. Although Calvin might have worded it differently, God is transcendent and existing outside spacetime; and therefore not restricted by its limitations. Unlike human ideas that are incapable of taking everything into consideration and thus, are imperfect; God's flawless comprehensions of all things (his law, his will, his thoughts) are perfect as they are expressions of his being. Human ideas or concepts are not conceived in transcendence

⁹ I. John Hesselink, *Princeton Theological Monograph Series*, vol. 30, *Calvin's Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, Pa.: Pickwick Publications, 1992), 35.

and therefore, are subject to continuous evaluation and assessment of viability. If a human idea upsets or angers another person or group of people, the originator might say, “Don’t be angry! It was just an idea. I didn’t stop to think that this or that aspect of my idea would offend. I failed to take your perspective of my idea into consideration. Sorry, I’m only human.” Humanity can justify inadequacies because human ideas are not necessarily part of human “being” because they are “fallacious”. (Note this term “fallacious” is ultimately theological, relating to the “fall” of humanity from God’s presence as a result of a rejection of God’s being (love, will, law). Therefore, a human can disavow another human’s ideas without disavowing his or her fellow human “being”, but a human “being” rejecting God’s love, will, or character is in fact, rejecting God because God’s ideas are transcendentally and flawlessly conceived from his eternal “being”. There will be a discussion of this in more detail in the chapter to come regarding the irrational rationale for rejecting the existence of God.

Consideration of a contemporary hypothetical example of how this idea would look could be helpful. If one were to argue, “God is love -- love should then be the guiding principle by which humanity subsists and a society exists”.

Calvin would likely agree, but would stop the discourse to qualify what “God is love” means. For Calvin one cannot make the simplistic declaration that just because God is love, then human beings should love each other. How would they accomplish this feat on their own without God, since he is love? In other words, how can you love without love? It is either present or it is not. To say that we love without God’s involvement is then, not possible. For Calvin humanity is incapable of love, aside from its most simplistic expressions, without first understanding God and then having our

humanity assimilated with his being. After all, if love is the essence of God's being (*God is love*); humanity would be completely inept to fathom love's reality, let alone apply it practically in the world without the progenitor of love. That would be tantamount to getting water in a desert without hydrogen and oxygen. One might find a way to create a clear liquid that has some of the same attributes as water by combining other present elements, yet it would not be water unless one could get two hydrogen atoms covalently bonded to a single oxygen atom.

Using this H₂O illustration, a rudimentary concept of what love looks like (a clear liquid) might be obtained by mixing and matching other attributes and ideas such as a peace treaty or a socially engineered behavior of political correctness. It might take the form of a law not to steal or take life, or discriminate; but the law is obeyed not because of a concern for the wellbeing of others; but out of a fear of the punishment that might come from breaking the law. Scripture states, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he (Christ) first loved us."¹⁰ Subsequently, peace and harmony without God may seem to have some of the attributes of love; an absence of killing for example, but it won't really be love without God's present spiritual involvement covalently bonding with a human soul.

Calvin might go further still, to quote Jesus' words "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love"¹¹. This perspective calls for a specific behavior on the part of the person claiming to love his or her fellow human being; a behavior corresponding to their claim

¹⁰ I John 4:18,19 (English Standard Version, ESV)

¹¹ John 15:10

of love. For Calvin, a specific behavior attesting or supporting the verbal claim is similar to a solicitor (lawyer) entering evidence into court to prove his or her case. A biblically prescribed behavior sets the standard and serves as a testifying witness that the person alleging to “love” is truly exemplifying God’s love and thus, demonstrating themselves to be one of God’s chosen “elect” children.

Without a tangible, physical evidence of love (obedience to God’s laws) there is no love. The claim of love without such evidence is either false or at best, inadmissible as evidence because it is only hearsay and unsubstantiated evidentially. The claim of love alone without the corresponding act of obedience is not admissible in the court of God’s justice in Calvin’s view.

From Calvin’s perspective, even though love may seem a guiding principle to humanity; any perception of peace and harmony is a really a misnomer; it won’t last because it does not coalesce with God, the one who is love. Calvin’s view, (not unlike Catholic and Lutheranism’s) of humankind is that it is failed in its independent attempts at love apart from God’s involvement. There will be a coming engagement with Hegel about this but for now, one might ask, “How might Calvin viably make such a claim?” Because humanity is not demonstrating obedience to God’s commandments. They may say they love, but there is killing, theft, deception, and corruption everywhere. Subsequently, any thoughts of love leading humanity are like a husband who says he loves his wife, yet ignores or worse, betrays his spouse by having sexual liaisons with others. He fails to provide for his wife in a context of security, emotional support, and loyalty; and in so doing, demonstrates his verbal expressions of love as disingenuous. This is the first precept of Calvin’s theology: The total depravity of humankind.

Calvin sees hypocrisy, whether in an individual or society, where love in word to fellow human beings is not accompanied by compliance with God's laws. And this is arguably where things begin to get a bit murky in understanding Calvin. Why? Because Calvin's logic has a great deal of merit. It often has biblical support in terms of conformity to the letter of God's law. For example, I John says, "If anyone says, 'I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.'"¹² James' epistle puts it another way,

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.¹³

Catholic and Lutheran theologians, ministers, and practicing Christians will cite the same passages of the New Testament to attest the very thing Calvin is saying. That true love is untrue if not backed up by tangible expressions of that love. Paraphrases of these kinds of biblical expressions are commonplace in contemporary secular American society today.

African American essayist and intellectual James Baldwin, writing on racism in America, recalls the theme in one of his essays, "I can't believe what you say, because I

¹² I Jn 4:20-21

¹³ Jas 1:22-27

see what you do.”¹⁴ Even secular and non-religious people who are morally and ethically just and caring will not disagree, citing their own version of the Bible as “the Golden rule”. So if everyone agrees that a good person affirms a claim of love by an act of love, then what is the problem with Calvin? The answer to this is complex because Calvin’s theology is not wrong and it is not completely misapplied. This is key, the misapplications of Calvinism are understood not through the theology they espouse, but in the underlying motives behind those applications on some, but not all, of Calvin’s strategic levels of understanding.

This is where life *a la Calvin* seems to go awry in parts of Europe and the Americas. Heavily Calvinist influenced cross-sections of society start enforcing compliance of God’s laws as interpreted by Calvin, and later, his appointees and their successors, on the general population. So it is not so much compliance with Jesus’ words, but Calvin’s occasional interpretation or misinterpretation and more, the attitudes and motives behind those interpretations which will be filtered through the agendas of his successors. Later, compliance with God’s law according to some of these distorted interpretations became the justification for non Christ-like behaviors. Some of Calvin’s followers and some of his follower’s followers began inflicting cruelty on people in order to perpetuate their own positions of power and rulership. Thus, allowing those individuals to create and maintain a societal posture of dominance in societies they lived in. And this shines a little light on the complexity of the issue. To make it all the more confusing, one must keep in mind that not all of Calvin’s followers behaved cruelly or judgmentally, just some. And subsequently in the twenty-first century there are some evangelical Christians

¹⁴ James Baldwin, *The Library of America*, vol. 98, *Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 738.

who might try to “force” Christianity on everyone as they believe it should be sociologically posited in culture; but an overwhelming majority of evangelical Christians will not. The reason they will not is because the entire foundation of a biblical worldview for humanity is predicated on the personal choice to receive Christ, God’s laws, and God’s will; not out of fear of punishment or retribution. It is the perception of force that is the cause for much of the dilemma surrounding the fear that Christianity is being imposed on everyone. The gospel of Jesus (the good news) is focused on “sharing”, and this sharing is what is often perceived as “ramming Christianity down everyone’s throat”.

A most curious phenomenon as compared to sharing something regarded by society as good news in general. An announcement taxes are being lowered. No one complains. Cancer is cured? Everyone is happy. Eternal life has been granted in a perpetual state of health, joy, and purpose; all at no cost to the recipient, as Jesus paid it himself. People begin to scream, “Christians are forcing this on us!” By the same token, not all secularist are screaming this accusation; nor are all of them intent on persecuting Christians. In fact, the majority of Christians and secularists get along fine, respecting each other’s views and beliefs and making compromises along the way to promote peace.

There have been shining examples across America where a plaque of the Ten Commandments is erected; a manger scene at Christmas stands on the courthouse lawn and neither are challenged; where Muslim kids are allowed off school on Islamic holidays, and a Jewish Menorah is displayed next to the manger scene at Christmas in the celebration of Hanukkah. Mandatory prayer in public school is prohibited but voluntarily attended meetings of any tradition are allowed on school grounds when not conflicting with education. All this has resulted in no burning effigies, no marches, no one spewing hateful rhetoric.

There is an agreement to disagree, or better still, there is just a disagreement with the caveat that it is okay to feel differently; to believe differently; and to express those distinctions publicly, as long as it is done in a civil, respectful, and kind manner. The results: instead of debates there are discussions, and everyone can make their case and amend their position as they go forward; without fear of reprisal, prejudice, or humiliation. People with very different worldviews actually have points of convergence that can be celebrated together in friendship. True Christianity as per the bible, would have this cultural and societal affect in America if the United States were a truly a Christian nation; but as former President Obama so poignantly announced in 2009, “America is not a Christian nation.”

Calvin and/or *some* of his followers are not the first ones in history, or even in the Bible to think God needed a helping hand. But Calvin’s impact has much further reaching consequences from an anthropological perspective than others in that his influence has often shaped the course of human behavior in a way that is seen as negative. But the precursor to Calvin’s strategic views can be seen on a localized tactical scale in Luke 9. If one believes in the divine inspiration of the scriptures, then one can see this vignette is inserted to teach people what not to be like. The Gospel record speaks of a certain village where Jesus and his teachings were rejected. As Jesus and his disciples were leaving the village James and John (John will ironically become known as the disciple of love years later) are indignant and having seen Jesus work many miracles, decide to take matters in their own hands. They speak up and ask Jesus if they could use the miraculous to bring fire falling from heaven to destroy the offending village. Jesus rebuked them and the King James version of the Bible has an interesting interpretation of Jesus’ response to

James and John. He replies, “you don’t know the spirit you are of.” In other words, Jesus was not saying that the village was justified in rejecting him. Nor was Jesus saying that there wouldn’t be a negative consequence to their rejection (a judgment). What he was trying to tell James and John is that both God and God’s law are important but only God is just and therefore, only his judgments in his own time are appropriate; and more, those judgments are always tempered with mercy. An attitude of hatred and judgment of others is not how God wants humanity to interact with each other. God’s law, God’s will, God’s ways...they can’t be legislated, forced, or enforced by society. These are matters of the heart and spirit and they must be taken up by each individual and settled with God in a personally spiritual way.

Outer changes and reforms of behavior; ones that can be seen by others, come from a person’s own self-realization that change is needed. This realization motivates each person to voluntarily submit his or herself to a new course; one that is reflecting a new way of seeing life which finds congruence with God’s expressed law. It is not humankind’s duty to judge each other, but rather to love each other by expressing God’s truth in the spirit of God’s love but more, by exemplifying a love emanating from a true motive of doing good; one emulating God’s kindness while allowing each person to respond as they choose; even if it is a rejection of God’s expressed views as stated in scripture.

While Jesus made his intentions clear to everyone and was rarely silent, he never forced those views on others. He made his case, gave his reasons, gave rebuttal; and gave warnings of the natural consequence of disobedience; which was separation from God

who is the source of light, life, peace, joy, and hope. It is to be left without a purpose for being.

Jesus did not pull out a sword and cry “Off with their heads”. Nor did he ever claim that God hates people who choose a course contrary to God’s law as stated in scripture. He asserted rather that God’s love would never fail to be present for every human being whether they complied with God’s ideas or not.

Like a parent who warns a child going out to play to be careful not to walk into a busy street; yet the child does so anyway and is struck by a vehicle and killed; the parent’s love for that child is not diminished by the child’s non-compliance. The parent can’t punish the child for disobedience; nor would the parent want to punish the child if that were possible; the death of the child is the consequence of the child’s willful and personal disobedient action. But Calvin’s interpretation of this scenario would likely call for a constant monitoring and evaluation of the child’s attitude before the child would even be allowed to go out and play. A human assessment and judgment made by the appropriate authority, as to whether the child had a proper attitude would dictate whether the child could go. And if the child’s attitude was not what Calvin or his followers judged as appropriate, then punishment should be given in advance, not to protect the child from being struck by a car; but to protect the parents from prosecution and stigmatism in society as unfit guardians. It would be to protect their place of credibility before the rest of the community; one which if compromised would interrupt the *pax Romana*, the peace through fear, by allowing the bad attitude of the child to poison society and disrupt the coerced harmony.

The age-old philosophical query, if there is a God and if God is good, then how can he allow bad in the world, might be understood better in Susan Schreiner's essay on Calvin's sermons on the Old Testament book of Job. In brief, Job was a man of God who was blessed in health, finance, and the love of a good family. Satan secured permission from God to test his commitment to God by taking everything away except Job's life.

In the midst of Job's darkest hour of sickness and poverty, while facing the loss of his children, three of his friends come to "comfort" him by trying to help him rationalize the reason that a good God would allow this to happen to him. Their "comfort" turns into condemnation asserting Job must not really be good. For Calvin, Job's response to them is to stand his ground that he is a good person and God has reasons for allowing these seeming frequent miscarriages of justice. The "friends" of Job "claimed to see within history an equitable order whereby the wicked were always punished and the good were rewarded. They could defend God's justice only by insisting on the visibility of providence and thereby associating all suffering with punishment for sin. Calvin had to wonder how these men, who voiced all his favorite themes and convictions, could have been rebuked in the end."¹⁵ Schreiner argues that Calvin might well have agreed with Job's friends, but in the end Job is vindicated and his friends shown to be wrong so Calvin's response to this is

their foundation was wrong. They take a general argument and apply it wrongly; that is; that Job was being punished because of his crimes and they considered him an evil and abominable man...They, therefore, have a false and perverse doctrine in saying that God treats people in this world as they have deserved. But that doctrine would take away hope for eternal

¹⁵ Donald K. McKim, ed., *Calvin and the Bible* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 64.

life and would enclose all God's grace within that fallen and fragile life. This then, is to pervert everything.¹⁶

There are indisputably good and bad people in the world. This can't be denied as they are seen doing good and bad things; and as God is sovereign, one can only conclude that since he has created both; the bad must be created by God as a means to distinguish his own divinity at work in the good people. This distinction will affirm God's power and goodness ultimately triumphing over evil. The good people exhibiting God's goodness are known as the 'elect'. They are created for heaven by God's own sovereignty over all things. Humanity cannot know God's reasoning and would be incapable of comprehending it if it could be known. Therefore, for Calvin, humanity cannot rationally question it. The good are predestined by God for heaven, the bad for hell.

This bend toward legalistically interpreting scripture begat fear and intolerance instead of the joy and peace posited by Christ's love as shown in the Bible. That is not to say Calvin and many of his followers were not experiencing genuine spiritual renewal, but over time, some of his followers would use Calvin's overarching theological legalism as justification for everything from corporal punishment to burning dissenters at the stake to purge the evil and keep it from infecting the community. These unChristian behaviors occasionally surfaced in some Calvinist communities serving to perpetuate those in authority in their own places of rulership in those communities. This desire for *purity* as Calvin defined it, took root in England as Puritanism and with the Pilgrims, then in Scotland as Presbyterians. Soon these would export their own distinctive views of Calvin's legal theory with an ever-widening umbrella of coverage into the new world

¹⁶ *Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*. Ed. G. [Wilhelm] Baum, E. Cunitz, and e. Reuss. 59 vols. Bound in 31. *Corpus Reformatorum*, vols. 29-97. Brunswick: C.A. Schwetschke and Son, 1863-1900. xxxv: 494.

having both positive and negative consequence; and giving rise to such conflicted historical events such as the founding of American public education as well the Salem Witch trials, along with many lesser-known, yet equally infamous incidents.

But this kind of thinking eventually caused even Calvin's own followers, to begin to question their own eternal disposition. As Calvin's Geneva theocracy evolved in the sixteenth century, his faithful followers, living under this compulsory religious culture, increasingly became troubled with questions and concerns about how they could confirm their own place in the "elect". Calvin seems to have quieted their concerns by using Jesus' teachings filtered through his interpretations. For example, if one of his followers asked him, "How do I know I'm part of the elect, Brother John?" Calvin might quote Christ,

For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.¹⁷

Calvin would add, "If you are the elect then God will bless you, and you will be prosperous. So don't be lazy, don't be idle. Work hard so that no one will suspect that you are not anything except part of the elect! Work hard until you possess earthly possessions; for your material successes will evidentially demonstrate God's blessing on your efforts and thus, prove your election to heaven. God only blesses his 'elect'!"

Eventually this mindset emerged in the United States, losing its spiritual significance, but retaining its importance sociologically, to become known as the American work ethic. "Work hard; own everything, and you ensure that you won't go to

¹⁷ Luke 6:43-45

to the poor house. America is a place of opportunity and everyone can have the blessings of life, liberty, and ownership of property if they are willing to work hard enough.” This salvation via hard work and human endeavor is the very thing Luther was trying to reform out of the Catholic Church in their selling of indulgences to free loved ones from purgatory.

While the Bible teaches God wants to bless humanity conditionally; it is a blessing inclusive of everyone. Further, the blessings in question are first and foremost, spiritual ones. They may or may not carry over into genres of life that can be measured by matters such as finance or material wealth. The Bible has many examples of happy and healthy people with little material wealth, as well as examples of those who own much and are miserable. And on occasion, there are significant examples of people who have much who are very happy and healthy. But almost without exception, these rare individuals use their material wealth to further God’s causes and those are repeatedly expressed as caring for the poor and marginalized both materially and spiritually.

This cultural Calvinism came to have an effect in the colonies and influenced the formation of the United States. Enlightenment thinking shifted emphasis from biblical discourse to human rationality; yet the river flowed on. The brook of Christian spirituality did not dry up under the scorching inquiry of enlightenment thinking but rather merged with it. Ebbing and flowing together, this strange blend of religious irreligiosity intensified through the enlightenment’s own failure to resolve societal challenges to humankind. This combined human thinking and human endeavor became the mighty river, Modernity.

Modernity's transformation of the intellectual and cultural discourse morphed from spiritual to secular. Secularism's seemingly irreligious ideas now touch nearly every discipline of academia through the arts and sciences in Europe and the Americas; but it does so by religiously engaging Calvinistic legalisms rebranded as secularism and pluralism.

Postmodernism has tried to surgically remove this Calvinistic persona from culture in an attempt to remove religion from government by applying societal pressure. This is accomplished partly by the influence of an academia affirmed by sympathetic segments of the media, partly by legislation shamed into passage by public opinion socially engineered by media and often formed without a basis in fact or one that is skewed to create a prejudicial negative personification of Christianity.

It has attempted separating science from spirituality and ethics from rationality. But postmodernism is already being pronounced "dead on arrival" by some sociologists. Nine out of ten Americans still believe in God, depending on what poll one looks at. The public is not always agreed on who God is, or how God's existence should be defined; but the belief remains strong. Influences of Christianity: Catholicism, Luther and Calvin's theology are not only still alive and well but continue to be enmeshed with America's cultural circulatory system.

For Calvin's religiously affected secularists, evangelical Christianity often constitutes a clear and present danger to democracy and freedom. It stands ready to enslave everyone to the rigors of forced Christian legality, intolerance, and compliance. *Some* secularized elements of American society fear what they have come to call "the religious right" will force their views of Jesus on everyone and potentially allow some

contemporary version of burning dissenters at the stake. Or so it seems to be put forth to the public. In some small and specific echelons this concern can actually be justified. Bombings of abortion clinics, murders of doctors that commit abortions on women have given credence to this view. But these incidents are so rare in comparison to the numbers of evangelical Christians that voice their views peacefully and civilly; that one must be willing to knowingly accept distortion to embrace them. There are almost identical extremist distortions of Islamic theology in America. Compared to the overall populace of Muslims in the United States, Muslim extremists who resort to radicalism and violence are less than one percent of the Muslim population; yet they are societally lumped in with Islam, and have been used to create hatred in the same way. The number of people espousing acts of hatred or violence committed by Christians in the United States are even fewer per capita than in the Muslim population; yet often attributed to Christianity as a whole by certain secularist elements. But these acts of violence are not in harmony with Christianity at all. Or at least not a Christianity as Christ described it in the Bible. In many cases, not even Calvinistic, as Calvin would have described his own ideas, but rather a distorted, contorted, perverted expression of Calvinistic, legalistic theology that is being categorized generally as “Christian”. The irony is that these secular elements of America expressing such fears and trepidations of *the religious right* seem to show a cultural affect themselves of legal rationalizations exemplifying some striking resemblances to the Puritan Calvinists religiously inspired legalisms.

If so, then this Calvinistic contorted Christianity is simply renamed: secularism, seeking to blot out religion via a religiously propagated perverted form of Calvinism.

From an anthropological perspective secularism is religious in its application and practice. The same attitudes that led to the inquisitions, tortures, and burnings at the stake in the sixteenth centuries and seventeenth centuries in Europe and the American colonies are arguably beginning to be seen in many courts rulings, school boards sessions, and town council meetings across the United States.

Can one directly link irreligious secularism in the United States to Calvinism? Certainly Calvin is not the only influence in secularism's formation; but the case being made here is declarative that if American secularism is not resting on Calvinism as its cornerstone; then Calvinism is a bonding agent mixed into the societal concrete that serves as its foundation.

Do American irreligious secularists think and rationalize their ideas by using a Calvinistic religious process of thought? In order to objectively answer that question one must step back from the issue and ask whether it was rational to say that Lenin was affected by Marx? Of course there is no question historically but that he was. But what spawned Lenin's process of thought compelling him to engage Marx in the first place? It might have been his anger and resentment of the Czarist government for arresting his father, or executing his brother in 1887. While Lenin does not say, "I'm going to remake the culture of Russia predicated specifically on the blueprints of Marxism, the historical breadcrumbs (or perhaps, historical loaves of bread in Lenin's case) make an overwhelming case that this is what happened. And while Lenin is perhaps hyperbole here, an overcast to illustrate the point being made; it does nonetheless show how the many pieces of the small can be historically put together to show the larger picture.

A process of thought was created by people and events in Lenin's life that shaped the mechanisms of his thought; the process by which his mind contemplated life in general. These processes made Marx a compelling way in which to right wrongs or eradicate injustices experienced in his own past on a much larger scale.

Even so, the coming discussions are set forth to demonstrate, among other things, that secular processes of thought in the west, and particularly the United States, are largely propagated in a religious way; one that is Calvinistic in that these thought processes are used for justifying resistance against evangelical Christianity from the standpoint of protecting society from a defiling influence; just as hyper Calvinists used the same justification for protecting Puritan society from what they deemed unbiblical ideas.

There is certainly no dearth of scholarly discourse on John Calvin, Calvinism, or Calvin's systematic theology. But the distinctive consideration of Calvin's views so dramatically impacting western civilization, and America in particular, is a path less traveled. Despite the fact that fewer discussions in this stream of discourse are in play, there is still a great deal of thought and writing on aspects of Calvin's theology clearly picked up in Puritanism. They are brought along as a branch cast in a stream and carried by the cultural current to bring a wealth of ideas and writings into contemporary scholarship as the questions about Calvin's affect ripple out into diversities of other disciplines.

German sociologist, Max Weber, writes the seminal work connecting Calvin with the culture of America in a context of economics in 1904-1905. This is one of the first of few writers that studies the correlating historical line from John Calvin's theology

through puritanism, colonial America, the founding fathers, and American history to the present. Of course, to quote the writer of Ecclesiastes, *there is nothing new under the sun* and this subject is no exception. Gary Smith's *The Seeds of Secularization: Calvinism, Culture, and Pluralism in America* (1985) directly address the issue as it could be seen and understood in his generation. Smith's book, however deals with only a snippet of American history connecting well established Calvinist ideologies with unfolding American events between 1870 and 1915. Showing the affect of Christianity's threatened response to Darwinism and issues of that period. As scholarship emerges into the twenty-first century, the discourse begins to take shape in discussions of how Calvinism has influenced the arts, architecture, and other aspects of American culture. So in that regard, this work, while not groundbreaking per se, will certainly plow in scholarly soil that is barely scratched and not fallowed by any means.

Historically, it can be demonstrated that nations and cultures that fail to recognize societal weaknesses within tend to disappear; some over time, such as the Romans, some abruptly, or violently, like the Mayans. The real question is whether Europe and the United States can continue as viable purveyors of global influence with the rising of China's powerful influence, or India's affect touching the world. Will America's current cultural trajectory as they drive forward under the influence of a distorted Calvinistic influence, take them to a new destiny of affluence? Or will they run off the road via this societal inebriation and sink in the swamp of forgotten civilizations past?

There are two interesting and noteworthy points that should be considered when addressing these kinds of questions. Firstly, most Americans have not changed their position on belief in God despite the influence of atheism via science and academia over

the last hundred years. Science and academia have asserted their superior intelligence in contrast to that of the majority of less educated people; but have failed to convince that majority of their superior intellect via that education. And secondly, the prevailing atmosphere of ecumenisms, political correctness, and perhaps many other influences layered as sediment in the culture, have successfully reduced God from being seen as the transcendent one who joined his own creation by making a part of himself, an expression of humanity (Christ); it has changed God into an unidentified, ambiguous, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, multi-traditional, multi-faith being of “higher power” that can be subjectively plugged into any relativistic, pluralistic hole one might want as a deity.

Is it because society wants to be polite or tolerant of other traditions that it has done this, or is that “correctness” nothing more than a cultural mask being placed on the truth to both deceive and placate a naïve generation that has no idea what they believe or why they believe it? With all of this in mind, and much more, the strategy to be employed here will be to discuss the rationality of theistic belief versus atheism and whether atheism itself is really a philosophical expression of theism; naming humanity or humanity’s accomplishments (science), as a genre of deism; and its adherence, an anthropological liturgy (secularism).

As Christianity is about Christ; and whereas Jesus is revealed through the scriptures of the Bible; a brief, but refreshed discussion of the viability of the Bible as divinely inspired is mandated. Is there a rational case for evidentially considering the Bible thusly? What about the claims of Jesus as being the Jewish Messiah? Dealing with all of this subject matter in one volume might be considered ludicrous; and yet the

discourse will really be doing nothing more than attempting a simplistic yet elegant readdress of age-old questions such as, Is there a God and what does that mean? Does God speak to humanity through the Bible and why is the Bible's claim to viability held as sacred? It will be argued that after six millennia there is finally a historical and philosophical context in which to set humanity and religious behavior within the purview of Christianity.

What is Christianity really? It must be defined in practice and contrasted from the institution or "religion" so named. Christianity is defined in the Bible as those who follow "the Way"¹⁸. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."¹⁹ This personal and very spiritual self-realization must be viewed in distinction to those who practice the denominational religious institutionalization of Jesus teachings, teachings demanding humanity to follow an institution asserting itself as Christ's representative on earth.

¹⁸ Acts 9:2

¹⁹ John 14:6

II

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” (John 1:6)

John Calvin was from Noyon, France; a city in the province of Picardy some fifty miles northeast of Paris. Elsie May Johnson’s description of the city in *Man of Geneva* poignantly demonstrates the genesis of Calvin’s ideas on how societies should function. The city was walled to keep enemies out and *protect* inhabitants within; meaning the religious lives they led. One does not need to be a trained historian in the United States to understand the significance of wall-building to keep undesired elements out. As Noyon’s walls were built to protect its religious life and keep it safe from outside influence; the historical lessons of walls...the walls of Jericho, the Great Wall of China, Hadrian's wall in Britannia, the Maginot line to protect France after World War I, the Berlin Wall between East Berlin and West Berlin during the Cold War; and many others...all have demonstrated one thing: they are ultimately unsuccessful. While seemingly able to keep some in and others out for a time; every wall is eventually broken down, climbed over; tunnelled under, or broken through. The insistence on a wall being constructed between America’s southern border and Mexico (a focality in the 2016 American Presidential election) to keep illegal aliens out by the Trump administration is a typical example of the intellectual process being posited here. Calvin clearly did not originate this intellectual mindset; he inherited it and then passed it on) Note: Donald Trump’s claim to Christianity is that he is a Presbyterian. Presbyterianism was the Scottish church formed by John Knox, a disciple of John Calvin. Of course, not all Presbyterians want to build walls. But this religious predisposition is present; not only in the Presbyterian church but in a number of other evangelical and mainline protestant churches.

There are certain aspects of Calvin's affect still very visible in some people but these sightings are only seen on certain instances. For others who might be sitting in the church pew next to these individuals; it is completely absent. There seem to be triggers that cause the intellectual process to engage; and others that cause it to disengage. The same can be said in secularized segments of society, that non-biblical and distorted Calvinistic religiosity is being used against biblical Christianity (Calvinist, Lutheran, and Catholic alike, as their common thread is biblical spirituality).

Noyon had at its heart a cathedral captained by the renowned and highly respected Bishop Charles de Hangest. France had a king but it was de Hangest who ruled the city. The Bishop's son, Claude would be one of Calvin's fellow students and best friends in school and would eventually become a Bishop himself. In Noyon Priests and monks in dark robes were seen everywhere asserting the importance of the church with their presence and activity. The small, but bustling city of 10,000 was the destination of many pilgrims as the cathedral housed a very significant collection of religious relics. It was believed that contact with the relics would bring divine aid and good fortune. There was only a nominal charge for viewing the relics yet, over the course of a year the cumulative income to the cathedral was quite significant.

Later, Calvin would come to despise the Catholic Church and seek to replace it completely in contrast to Luther, who simply wanted to reform its unscriptural teachings and behaviors such as these. This is ironic in that Calvin's own version of Noyon would eventually be replicated in Geneva and his theology would be known as "reformed theology". Clearly his upbringing was impactful, not only from what he would see in the city of his birth but in his family as well. John Calvin's mother had died when he was

only three years old and what he knew of her was only what he was told. “She was the daughter of a well-to-do innkeeper. Her name was Jeanne le Franc.”²⁰ Calvin’s father, Gerard Cavin, had remarried, giving him a stepmother. Gerard was a lawyer, retained in the employ of the business and legal affairs of the cathedral. He was both very loving and yet, very strict with young John.



The Library of the Society of the History of French Protestantism, Paris

The elder Cavin’s (Calvin) patience and tolerance was extended to John only inasmuch as John showed a willingness to submit to his father’s very determined objectives to see him become a priest and forge a place in society that was powerful, respected, admired, and financially secure. Thus, a clear connection can be made in John’s intermix of law, love, religion, religious activity, and religious behavior. One

²⁰ Reyburn Hugh Young, *John Calvin: His Life, Letters, and Work* (London, NY: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), 7.

significant aspect of Calvin's family that is often seemingly minimized is the story of his older brother. Calvin had two brothers that died in infancy; and one younger brother that, with his younger sister would follow him to Geneva. But his elder brother Charles, had been placed on a similar track by their Father. Charles was brought up under the same strict upbringing and exposed to the same intertwined civil religiosity of Noyon as his younger brother would be as he was educated for the priesthood. Two striking distinctions were present that differentiated him from his younger brother. The first, he finished his training in the priesthood and became a parish pastor of Roudy in 1527. The second thing was that he never seemed to have a spiritual experience, or awakening, as John or Martin Luther did. But as John progressed through school, began to lecture, and be associated with the reformation; even when John became suspect and was wanted for heresy; Charles seemed to demonstrate through his behavior, that he had indeed been influenced and impacted by everything around him, just as John was. Yet the spiritual experience that tempered John's behavior (perhaps not his speech or writings) was not present in Charles and it showed. While John was in and out of trouble for what he said or wrote theologically, "Charles was going from bad to worse in his conduct. He had a quarrel with the beadle of Noyon Cathedral; for this he was put under discipline. Then he had a quarrel with one of the cannons and struck him in the face; for this he was excommunicated."²¹ Ultimately, his path would lead him to the fateful autumn of 1537 when Charles was executed. Charles' propensity to make judgements with a contentious and quarreling demeanor; one that's seems to have a potential for physical violence, is the affect in question. One might argue that anyone can be quarrelsome and lose their temper. This might be true, but it would have been highly unusual for a man in Charles' position.

²¹ Reyburn, 21

He was trained, tested, and ordained as a priest. It is strange that his intemperate disposition leading to violent conduct was not checked earlier on. So one might conclude that this behavior was a growing and evolving process that did not become a matter of concern until it threatened the peace of the religious status quo. There were issues and matters that obviously frustrated Charles; but that is not the point here. There were anthropological seeds of resistance planted early in life; both by his father and also by his perception of the civil religious culture that he witnessed in action on a daily basis. And thus, an uneasy tension was created; Charles' father's wishes for him to succeed, coupled with some kind of spiritual appreciation for Christianity, as best as he could view it; pulling against a constant religious interference in the daily lives of everyone he knew. Submitting to his father's wishes could have been rationalized by Charles as a "if you can't beat em join 'em attitude. But after years of education, tests, interviews, orientations, and finally ordination; Charles was seeing what John was seeing. Injustice, unbiblical conduct; moral compromise, corrupted judgments that clearly boiled up in his being as an ever increasing caldera of lava might in a volcano. The behavioral problems at the beginning were signs that the volcano was active; the increasing incidents and veracity of Charles's actions against religious authority signaled an imminent eruption. Reyburn, in the genteel style of the nineteenth century from whence he hailed, says that Charles struck the cannon in the face; the reality seems to be that Charles was so angry (and there is no confirmed record of what the issue was) that Charles doubled his fist and punched the cannon in the jaw. But even still, one might see after time that a person would cool off and come to their senses, apologize and make amends. But not Charles. "At the time of his father's death he (Charles) was still under excommunication, and was

forbidden to set foot within the cathedral precincts. His antagonism to the Church yearly increased, and he was accused of heresy. At the time of his death he refused the last sacrament and was ignominiously buried beneath the gallows.”²² The matter of significance here is his tendency to argue, and to do so with a prejudice leading to violence. And more still, it was a violence that was unrepentant even to death. This tendency can be seen in John Calvin’s speech but not through his theology. In fact John Calvin’s theology coupled with his spiritual experience restrained this tendency and ultimately tempered it. However, its filtration through John’s upbringing in Noyon, specifically, the civil religiosity and legalistic bend on religious behavior similarly found in Charles, spills out again in some, but not all of John’s followers later on; arguably the ones who see it as legal or civil system; or through the lens of an institutional societal governance; one which is protected in the same religiously sociological manner as Noyon’s. This is the first link in the chain connecting Calvinism as an institutional governance of religiosity to American secularism. As secularist have divorced God from the religious process of governing; some, but not all respond to any challenge with resistance, prejudice, and a resolution so determined that it seems like it could be headed for potential violence. One very prominent illustration contemporary to this writing occurred in 2015. When a public school teacher in Katy Texas allegedly told a little girl she must admit there is no God or she would be given a failing grade because no evidence could be cited by the little girl to prove her belief. Now what really happened is of course, a matter of interpretation and perspective; but what is known is the teacher was, by her own admission, very determined to assert her atheism. The other fact that can

²² Ioannis Calvini, *Corpus Reformatorum* Ed. G. [Wilhelm] Baum, E. Cunitz, and e. Reuss. vol.XXI (Strassburg: Brunsvigae: C.A. Schwetschke., 1863), 189

be known to be known is that the teacher was willing to overwhelm and intimidate any discordant voice in order that it might be silenced. The point of this is to make note that this is just one of literally hundreds, of similar incidents on record; and further, that they are increasing in both frequency and veracity. This same tendency was evident in Charles Calvin. He saw what his brother John saw; he experienced what John experienced, save John's personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Yet John's experience and theology is processed and filtered through those same early sociological effects as Charles'; John Calvin was not violent himself and while the Michael Servitus incident may indirectly place John in a posture of culpability, he was not directly connected to Servitus' death. By everyone's estimation, John Calvin was harsh, critical, and often judgemental; but not violent. What can be said about his theology and his attributed spiritual experience with Jesus can be credited for this behavioral distinction from his brother; and from many others living in the religious/civil society of Geneva. Some clearly shared personal experiences; some did not. But all were forced participants in a civil system imposed upon them in Geneva.

Returning to John Calvin's early days, it is to be noted that "Noyon was also a trading center for the surrounding villages. Donkeys laden with sacks of flour- their owners bargaining for the highest prices- could often be seen in the old Cornmarket Square."²³ These connections with people outside the city, provincial as they may have been, continually impressed young Calvin that the world was bigger than just his hometown and thus, a progressing desire to learn and assimilate can easily be detected in young Calvin. At twelve, he was placed in the College de la Marche, where under the tutelage of

²³ Elsie May Johnson, *The Man of Geneva: The Story of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 10.

an admired and much sought after instructor, Mathurin Cordier, John was grounded in Latin, further preparing him for the priesthood. But Cordier was very unusual for that day in that instead of giving beatings to children for academic failure he awarded prizes for success. This little factoid cannot be empirically proven to be connected with Calvin's ethical and spiritual formation, yet should not be disregarded as mere trivia. Once again, Calvin's ultimate position on eternal matters was to attest that they were predestined by God. Therefore, whatever a person could do to demonstrate they were predestined for heaven could be evidenced by their earthly successes; thus, ensuring his or her place in the *elect*. The reasoning is that God would not bless someone on earth that was destined for hell. God would never send any signal that might be construed as acceptance of anyone who lived their life outside of God's law. A historical document tying Calvin's theology to Cordier's unorthodox teaching method of reward is yet to be found, yet circumstantial evidence of Cordier's awards for success policies clearly found a resonance in Calvin's concepts of working hard to show one's self as part of the elect. Later this theme seemed to emerge in the writings of Benjamin Franklin in his widely circulated essay "The Way to Wealth" published in 1757 pseudonymously as "Poor Richard's Almanac". Franklin addresses the taxation issue in the colonies that would soon become one of the chief issues leading to the American revolution.

The taxes are indeed very heavy, and if those laid on by the government were the only ones we had to pay, we might more easily discharge them; but we have many others, and much more grievous to some of us. We are taxed twice as much by our idleness, three times as much for our pride, and four times as much by our folly, and free these taxes the commissioners cannot ease or deliver us, by allowing an abatement. However, let us hearken to good advice; and something may be done for us. 'God helps them that help themselves.'²⁴

²⁴ Benjamin Franklin, *The Way to Wealth: Advice, Hints, and Tips On Business, Money, and Finance* (New York: Skyhorse Pub., 2011), 6.

One can't help but see a line connecting Cordier's reward for success in Calvin's education to Calvin's later societal influences in Europe, eventually to take hold in the colonies and influencing Benjamin Franklin. How much did it influence Franklin? No one can say; but no one can say it didn't, as there are obvious intersects. Franklin's overarching inference is, "God is watching; so don't be lazy or idle." Ironically, even though Franklin is raised orthodox Christian, he embraces an enlightenment inspired deism in his mid life (which is the time of this writing). Yet, even so, he cannot seem to escape the Christian theological overlay despite his deistic views at that time of his life.

This idea about "work" conceptually evolved into what has become known as the *American Work Ethic* which, though dissipating significantly now, was very prominent in the American workplace through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is often seen in the last generation in the way they approached the workplace itself. "A day's pay for a day's labor." The American worker of the early twentieth century would likely look at the present generation of workers as they spend significant time during the workday on their phones or surfing the net on their computers while at the workplace as frivolous; in fact, fraudulent. When one is paid to work and is not doing that work, then it is actually stealing from the employer. The employer is led to believe falsely, that the worker is engaged in the task he or she was hired to do for a full eight hours of scheduled work; but they are clearly not.

Later in the life of Benjamin Franklin he seems to return to his more orthodox Christian upbringing. Although this historical record has been been disputed and many attempts have been made to discredit its authenticity, origin, and relevance as a primary source document, it is difficult to negate as it is in the notes of James Madison. It must be

said that it is included here not to become sidetracked with Benjamin Franklin's spirituality but rather so that one can see the affect of John Calvin's sociology, so to speak. According to James Madison's notes Franklin made the following appeal to the constitutional convention in Philadelphia,

In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the Contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection."Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a Superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth- that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that "except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and bye word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments be Human Wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest. I therefore beg leave to move, that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of the City be requested to officiate in that service.²⁵

The significance of all this, laying aside the discussion of the Christian spirituality of the founding fathers, is that in this short address to the constitutional convention, Benjamin Franklin alludes to four biblical references. Two from the Old Testament, Two from the new. It is important to see that the request for prayer at the onset of every session (a

²⁵ James Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1984), 209-10.

motion that became sidetracked in the discussion and never was voted on) and for a chaplain (clearly a Christian one) to inaugurate every session of the convention with prayer, is demonstrative of Calvin's theological influence as well as his innate proclivity to include Christian spirituality into the government. Though the chaplain/prayer question was not settled there, it did become, and remains part of the United States government. In April 1789 the first Chaplain of the United States Senate was elected, not by the constitutional convention (who ultimately did provide for it in the constitution) but by the United States Congress. A month later the House of Representatives followed the Senate's lead and every session of the congress for the last two and a half centuries has had only a Christian Chaplain. There are many, (some non-Christian) guest chaplains who open the session with prayer. Furthermore, as previously stated, true biblical Christianity, while true to Christ's directive to make disciples of every nation, is not forced and respectfully inclusive of diversity of belief. The congressional websites often posts scheduled Islamic worship services right beside announced Bible studies. The United States Senates' website introduces the purpose of the office of the Chaplain of the Senate:

During the past two hundred and seven years, all sessions of the Senate have been opened with prayer, strongly affirming the Senate's faith in God as Sovereign Lord of our Nation...The Chaplain's days are filled with meeting Senators about spiritual and moral issues, assisting Senators' staffs with research on theological and biblical questions, teaching Senate Bible study groups, encouraging such groups as the weekly Senate Prayer Breakfast, and facilitating discussion and reflection small groups among Senators and staff.²⁶

²⁶ "Office of The," United States Senate, accessed July 6, 2017, <https://www.senate.gov/reference/office/chaplain.htm>.

The current (2017) Chaplain of the United States Senate, African American, highly decorated, Retired Rear Admiral of the US Navy, Barry C. Black was elected to the post by the Senate in 2003 and has served the Senate under the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations. In February 2003 he spoke at the weekly prayer breakfast for the senate concluding his remarks with the the lyrics of the early 20th century hymn, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness,” Black passionately proclaimed. “On Christ, the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand!” It is important to see that Black’s Christian spirituality enmeshed with the government places him at the end of a line of many before him. A line with both good and bad people, right and wrong people, holy and immoral people stretching back through Franklin, further back still through Calvin. As Christians are after all, imperfect people, they aspire to the perfection of Jesus. The Christian life is a quest to attain that goal. But the seeds of Black’s commingling of spirituality and government are deeply rooted in Calvin’s French Catholic origins.

Cordier’s *reward for success* idea is only part of Calvin’s connection to the future.



As Calvin attained a proficiency in Latin, he was transferred to University of Paris’ Montaigu College as it was ideally suited for his next step toward the priesthood. Along with his instruction at Montaigu his education was supplemented in the study of the arts and philosophy.

Calvin was endowed with a vast array of ideas at the University; ideas that likely clashed frequently with what he had learned at Montaigu. Calvin's time in Paris would have a profound influence on him in at least two ways. First, there was the focus of the education itself by giving Calvin a foothold in Aristotelian thought. Syllogisms, which were somewhat looked down upon by some institutions at this time because they were seen as outdated, became Calvin's way of deducing answers to questions. Without an exhaustive discussion of what a syllogism is, suffice it to say that it is a masterful means of deductive reasoning that uses logic and reason to prove or disprove what something is or is not. The education Calvin received at Montaigu culminated in the *disputatio*, a defense of an argument held yearly as an oral defence, a final exam, in which the student would defend an argument against a master. "The syllogisms that abound in Calvin's own writings testify to the thoroughness of his training in Paris. For the intelligent student the *disputatio* meant a continual creative involvement in the subject he was studying, a clear understanding, and above all, readiness in debate."²⁷ Calvin is receiving a superior education at an early age. T.H.L Parker's biography on Calvin comments,

We have, therefore, to imagine Jean Cauvin, who has entered on his arts course at about age twelve or thirteen, attending the Latin lectures, learning to dispute, 'determining' for his baccalaureate in a couple of years and therefore, combining his studies with some teaching. After another year he will 'determine' for his licentiate and become Master of Arts at sixteen or seventeen (for which he would presumably need a concession from the regulation that Masters must be at least twenty-one).²⁸

The significance of Calvin acquiring skills and knowledge much earlier than usual is that a forced application of his acquired knowledge would prematurely press him; and would do so without the seasoning and experience of life that would normally temper a young

²⁷ T H L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 9.

²⁸ Parker, 10

man. Calvin was having only burgeoning contemplations that others may have different ideas, perhaps better ones, than his own. And these premature coronations heaped upon him in life repeatedly crowned him earlier than he should have been. Great skill, much knowledge, and only rudimentary understanding of knowledge's application led to misapplication. It must be noted that again and again, it is the people in Calvin's life that shape his worldview most. And those people will form a lasting influence on the future of Calvin's contributions to western civilization. And it is these people who represent the second great influence on Calvin from his time at Montaigu. They constitute a tension between at least two (perhaps more) voices, often competing and contradicting each other.

The first was Noël Bédier, not only a person of great significance in the administrative leadership at Montaigu, but also the leader of the most conservative group of theologians in the city of Paris. Parker's biography of Calvin describes Bédier as, "the watchdog who barked his warning when he scented any stranger, who bit first and offered no apology afterwards. Guided by the criterion, not the creeds of Christendom, not even of the statements of the medieval councils, but of the narrowly parochial, and thus inbred, theology of late medieval Paris itself."²⁹ Calvin is then frequently faced with sorting out what he saw as theological and ethical dilemmas. Bédier the biblical scholar, on one hand, teaching the truths of love and morality in Christianity and then on the other, exhibiting conflicting societal behaviors via the academic culture of theologians in Paris that existed to teach Christian morality and ethics; yet for the sake of perpetuating their own comfort, ease, convenience, and the very prestige of their culture itself; would violate the precepts of Christianity that they were there to teach.

²⁹ Parker, 7

The other influence at the college was Pierre Tempete, the principal. Tempete was known to be a reactionary. He seemed to detest the school and relished punishing and whipping the students for the slightest infraction. These two personal influences are combined with accompanying studies of Aristotelian logic to divulge a human template in the making, the Calvinist. Bedier was an extremely competent theologian, yet the maintenance of the Parisian theological culture took precedence over everything; including valid biblical theology. Fast forward to *some* not all, of the perspectives that are attributed to Evangelical Christianity in the twenty first century and a rebranded Parisian theological culture can be seen. In a January, 2017 *Huffington Post* article about the Trump administration's view on banning Syrian refugees for the sake of keeping potential terrorist from infiltrating their migrations into the United States. Dr. Robert Jeffress, reported to be a member of the president's advisory board by the Post, is quoted in the article as saying, "While Scripture commands individual Christians and churches to show mercy to those in need, the Bible never calls on government to act as a Good Samaritan."³⁰ Yet several news organizations (including Huffington) were careful to mention that the overwhelming view in evangelical Christianity is that America should not stop providing help to the Syrians, even for security reasons. But this one of many possible examples in contemporary American culture demonstrating what seems to be the same conflicting cultural paradigm that Calvin was exposed to in Paris. Did Calvin ever later admit, "I am what I am because of the conflicting signals I got from my professors as a youth?" No, he did not. Nor is it likely that one might find any evangelical Christian American in the twenty-first century that would say, "My theology is Calvinist and

³⁰ Carol Kuruvilla, "These Prominent Evangelicals Are Pretty Sure Trump's Refugee Ban Is Perfectly Moral," *Huffington Post*, January 27, 2017. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-evangelical-refugee_us_5888d058e4b0441a8f722f12 (accessed December 9, 2017).

subsequently, I want to keep the unclean elements out of our American community to prevent our culture from defilement, particularly the Muslim ones?” Certainly not! And therefore, no one is likely to unequivocally prove Calvinism has had the effect on American culture posited here; yet the case being made is done so, via a historical following of breadcrumbs; facts, figures, people, events, and vignettes of historicity; all of which can be substantiated through primary source documents. When pieced together in a historical mosaic, they demonstrate a plausibility if not probability of the claims being made in this writing. But returning to the thought about the correlation between Evangelical Christianity and Calvinism; specifically Dr. Jeffress’ quote in the *Huffington Post* that “the Bible never calls on government to act as a Good Samaritan”. Actually, the Bible is filled with many such examples.

One from Exodus 17, discusses God’s anger at Amalek for not providing aid and comfort to Israeli refugees after they left Egypt; in fact, God is so angry that the nation of Amalek did not render assistance to the migrating Israelis that he swore to wipe them from the earth; which did historically happen later on. And after Israel returned to Canaan, God spoke again to Israel this time; concerning their own treatment of “foreigners”. Consider the following brief passages from both the Old and New Testaments: “You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.”³¹ “You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”³² The point being: Jeffress’ view, that nations are not ethically or morally bound to care for refugees being subordinated to the security of the

³¹ Exodus 22:21

³² Luke 19:34

host nation is without biblical foundation. While there is biblical justification for a national defence, it is not made at the expense of neglecting the foreigner or immigrant. And it is just this type of perspective; one reflecting Calvinist ideology that was propagated by Calvin's successors, chiefly the Puritans that coalesced Calvin with American culture. This key to connecting Calvin with twenty-first century America is in the realization that it is not always Calvin that is being seen in culture; but rather an exaggeration or misapplication of Calvinism that seems to cause the problems associated with secular mindsets about evangelicalism; or as the title of this writing denotes, the "catastrophically confused Calvinism." A brief stroll down a scholastic rabbit trail may clarify this.

After the death of English King, Henry VIII, and his son, Edward IV, he is succeeded by his daughter, Mary whose mother was Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Queen Isabella of Spain and King Ferdinand II of Aragon, famed for sponsoring Christopher Columbus' discovery of the New World. Mary had witnessed the horrific treatment of her beloved mother, a devout Catholic, at the hands of her father, King Henry. Catherine was abandoned, betrayed, and died under mysterious circumstances. Mary had been removed from the line of succession and isolated from the court. Henry's mistress, Anne Boleyn, a former maid of Catherine's, eventually become Queen after Henry cut ties with Rome to make himself head of the new English church (Anglican, Episcopal) allowing him to dissolve his marriage to Catherine and legally marry Anne; but in time, Anne allegedly became influenced by Lutheranism and by some accounts reformed her prior horrific conduct accordingly, giving pause to the leadership of the Anglican church who apparently felt so threatened by her that they persuaded the King of

her unfaithfulness, and thus, she was beheaded. Finally, in 1553 (Mary, who in the intervening period was readmitted into the line of succession) succeeded her young half brother who died of “sweating sickness” to the throne. Her one mission seemed to be to rid England of Protestantism. The Anglican kind that her father used to divorce her mother; the Lutheran variety that may have influenced Anne, who was known in Rome as the “concubine”; and the Protestantism known as Calvinism, which was seen as another genre of the reformation and therefore, not Catholic.

Mary persecuted Protestants with a vengeance. But Mary died an agonizing death herself. Only three years into her reign, Mary perished slowly from what many believe today to have been ovarian cancer; screaming in intense pain as her victims did when burned at the stake. Her death ended a tragic chapter in English history. Mary was responsible for burning some 300 people, earning her the infamous name, “Bloody Mary”.

Fleeing England from her boisterous tyrannids were numbers of religious protestant refugees. Among them were several leaders of the reformed movement in Scotland, most notably John Knox, who had been mentored by Calvin and established the Presbyterian Church in Scotland. The persecution suffered under Mary became influential in Knox’s rejection of an unjust monarchy claiming the authority by divine right. The incumbent influence of Mary reign of persecution and Calvin’s acceptance in Switzerland led to the translation of the Geneva Bible in English, which was promoted as unauthorized by the English monarchy: a statement of rebellion to their leadership. This later had a profound influence on the founding fathers of the United States in their case against Great Britain's right to rule over them. The matter of import here is that Calvin

received these spiritual refugees gladly into the Geneva camp. He provided them aid, shelter, food, and ultimately a place in that society; and in the end sent many of them out as Calvinistic missionaries. Was it because this is what Jesus would have done? No one can say what is really in someone else's heart. But Calvin's reception of these religious refugees combined with Bedier's example in Paris years earlier, seems an unexpected mixture of Christian charity with a self-serving motive that added strength to the Geneva societal bond. There is historical evidence for this in the incident of Michael Servetus. Servetus was a Spanish physician and theologian, who had a significant doctrinal differences with Calvin connected with belief in the deity of Jesus. For once, Calvin and the Catholic church were on the same side. Servetus published many papers that were highly critical of Calvin's writings. But Servetus, himself a religious fugitive of Catholicism, made the mistake of coming to Geneva inognito to listen to Calvin preach. He is said to have worn a disguise but during the church service someone recognized him and reported his presence leading to his arrest. He was tried for heresy, not by Calvin, but by the civil authorities Calvin had placed in charge of the government.

In the end, Servetus was convicted and sentenced to death. But he appealed to Calvin for a death by beheading which Calvin granted. But Calvin's followers intervened. Many of them, having witnessed the preferred method of execution under Henry and later Mary, persuaded Calvin to have Servetus burned at the stake. Calvin's legal system did the work while Calvin did little except assert that the matter was being handled by the civil authorities according to the law. The significance here is that "burning at the stake" became a hallmark of dealing with heretics by the Puritans; one that would follow their migration to Massachusetts to be used in only one but very notable and infamous

circumstance, that of the Salem Witch Trials. In summary, it was not always directly Calvin, but an influential group of his followers who took Calvin's teachings and established new precedents of Old Testament punishments for rule breaking. These are events illustrating the connectivity of Calvin with contemporary evangelicalism and the seemingly conflicting behaviors in America. Returning to the youth of Calvin and his stay in Paris at the Montagu, Calvin's other principle influence was the principal himself, Tempete.

Tempete, in contrast to Bédier, was seen as angry at the lot he had drawn in life; he was said to have sought out infractions in his students in order to administer punishments on them. The students had no authority or ability to resist. And in the midst of this chaos Calvin was developing his abilities in logic, philosophy, and skills as a debater. Calvin was between fourteen and seventeen, and like young men in general, was naively influenced; perhaps even gullible at this phase of his life. The emotional stability and clarity of mind allowing independent choices made on the basis of personal reason and ethics, those emerging in most men later in life at time when they would compliment an accumulation of knowledge, seemingly were to never converge for Calvin; at least not in a way that would have helped him process the weights of responsibility in leadership that fell on his shoulders while he was yet in his twenties. Instead he had to process what he saw, experienced, felt, and learned within the framework of his own youthful impetuosity. It would send his emotions careening through the unfinished halls of his temperament crashing and banging into people, traditions, ideas, and even kings as they went. The results of this in Calvin were yet to be fully divulged; but what can be seen revealed that Calvin's great learning was being channeled through his experiences with

academic mentors. What he derived was conflicted as they were teaching one thing yet only partially living what they were teaching. It was not complete hypocrisy but a deceptive inconsistency peppered by periodic outbursts of unpredictability and irrational behaviors. The final impact on Calvin and his processing of his two distinctive leaders simultaneously are very much like trying to describe the political right and left in America today. So very different and yet the same. Capitalism and socialism clamoring, posturing, and slamming into each other like competing toddlers trying to gain dominance in a sandbox.

Political and sociological diagrams abound but the most common concept of right and left is a linear line with communism on the left and fascism on the right. A similar line can be drawn with secularism on the left and theocracy or ultra religiosity on the right. Certainly one can discuss the distinctives of the two extremes; but from the perspective of how people perceive, respond, react, and coexist with each other; these linear lines can be bent downward at the ends until the extremes meet to form a perfect circle. At the meeting points of communism and fascism, or the meeting points of the circle where secularism and ultra religiosity meet, the impact on how people live and exist is arguably identical. One might argue, and one has, that fascism *absorbs* potentially threatening institutions such as family, religious organizations or institutions whereas communism *destroys* them. The result of either gaining prominence is that the former institutions upon which the community was based are not there as it they were before. Survival is only possible through conformity to the new societal matrix being imposed on the culture. This affect is not just political or socio-economic but also anthropologically posited in both Evangelical Christianity and secularism through many examples and

stories of individuals or groups that are said to be mistreated, misjudged, marginalized, or restricted. The posturing for dominance is exemplified in the competitions of responding to the why and who is to blame for these inequities. The correlation of conflicted belief and behaviors is not coincidental. They are the workings of the two tensions religiously applying a partially confused Calvinism.

The opposite side of the circle from where these two meet is the place of moderation; and it is in that moderation that America finds safety from what is commonly seen as the bullying, separatist, racist, self-righteous, purveyors of a superior America's manifest destiny under God on the right; or the marching, chanting, hate-spewing, window-breaking, separators of church and state on the left. These are America's two true religious extremes hating and despising each other; battling in the press; lobbying against one another; posting on social media to make the other appear ignorant or uncaring. At their meeting point in the circle they mark the international dateline of this sociological globe where a line is drawn as night meets day. On the dark side of this circle it is Sunday on the other side its Monday. One side left, one right, yet they really are the same in terms of how their influence impacts society, culture, and people living within them. They both fail to deliver freedoms. Both spout tolerance and the need for change to help the greater good; yet gain is only granted to those that favor the furtherance of their extreme espoused agendas. This demarcation was very clear in World War II. The end result of National Socialism was a forfeiture of personal choices, beliefs, and preferences in favor of that being imposed by the Hitler regime. Across the border the very same can be said for the Soviet Union under Stalin. What did the average person end up with? Death, starvation, persecution, imprisonment, poverty, joblessness,

homelessness; and the loss of national identity instead of the promised better world. Despite the lessons of World War II people can still be found that want a Fourth Reich. They carry the banners of the Nazi Swastika and seek white supremacy over people of color. In contrast there are also Americans and Europeans who watched the absolute floundering of the Soviet Union in front of their eyes; witnessed the oppression of Mao in China, the lunacy of North Korea's leadership bringing the possibility of nuclear holocaust near again, and the imprisonments of political dissidents under the Castro regime; yet despite it all they still wave the red flag of communism with tears in their eyes.

Moving on with Calvin's intellectual and spiritual formation, with his skills as a theologian and philosopher still burgeoning, his father had a change of heart and quickly moved him to the University of Orlean to study Civil law. This decision was predicated on his father's belief that the wind had changed and now his son's greatest potential for financial success and a societal position commanding respect would be in civil law. In 1525 or 1526 as this shift occurred, everything changed for the young Calvin. Parker comments that Orleans was so different from Paris that many of Calvin's new contemporaries were just as interested in the new sport of tennis that was taking Europe's nobility by storm, as they were in the study of law. But for Calvin he "would be concerned with the innumerable material causes of man's dissensions with his neighbors - the disposition of rainwater, rights of way, leases, purchase and position, marriage and divorce, inheritance - and the decisions which generations of Roman and medieval jurists had given in such disputes."³³

³³ Parker, 16

Calvin may have gotten his ideas for the *Institutes* during his years as a law student. All law students had to become thoroughly familiar with the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (*Body of Civil Law*) based on the Justinian codification of 529 and 534. Its major elements were set out in three major textbooks. *Codex*, *Digesta*, and *Institutiones*. The *Codex*, or *Code* contained the authoritative statement of Roman law. The *Digesta* contained the legal opinions of ancient lawyers and a historical commentary on the *Codex*. The *Institutiones* was the elementary but authoritative textbook of law students. Calvin apparently conceived the idea of using the pattern of this text to write an elementary textbook of the Christian faith that would be for Christianity what *Institutiones* was for civil law.³⁴

After three years Calvin, with a bachelor's degree begins lecturing himself and quickly becomes regarded as a master instead of student. It is in this forum that Calvin's renown exponentially grew to even the notice of the throne. The king, initially enamoured by many of Calvin's ideas was quickly pressured by Catholic influences to condemn Calvin. There are some historical vignettes that will necessitate a return to this period later; but for now it is important to consider the significance of not only Calvin's theology but the rational consideration of theism itself. To comprehend the power of Calvin's ideas and how they shape culture, it is imperative to consider the distinction between superstitions, myths, and uneducated considerations of the gods, and the highly educated, well-schooled contemplations from Augustine or Thomas Aquinas.

³⁴ William Roscoe Estep, *Renaissance and Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1986), 227.

III

Is it rational to believe in God?

Truly comprehending Calvin's posited influence on American culture mandates a reconsideration of theism's most rudimentary constructs contextualized in Christian spirituality. The claims being made here are rather audacious and unsettling: that a contorted and often confused variant of Christian thought, bearing the fingerprints of John Calvin, by virtue of certain interpretations of his theology, forms a significant part of the sociological framework by which American culture subsists; one that has a potential for violence. And if so, the historian, sociologist, anthropologist, theologian, and philosopher are compelled by ethics, morality, and plain human decency to consider the implications of this consideration. No matter the researcher's tradition or belief system; understanding Calvin necessitates the imperative of revisiting the foundational assertions of Christianity itself. And then to compare and contrast these claims within the constructs of Calvin's theological system of thinking. With all these cogs and wheels turning it might be well to be reminded that Calvin is not revered, studied, and followed for five centuries because he was ignorant. Neither Calvin, nor his theology are the enemy of Western Civilization. Many aspects of Calvin's theology are in absolute harmony with Catholicism, Lutheranism; and even those who identify themselves as secular. Some aspects of it brilliantly coincide with other religious traditions all together and make our understanding of each other, scripture, and God clearer. Reformed churches in the United States are not the proponents of all theological error; nor are secularists and pluralists the agitators of injustice per se. Once again, the confusion leading to potential catastrophes are uncovered through the complexities of finding that

only *some* of Calvin's ideas, taken by *some* who followed him, *some* of the time in only *some* circumstances have created this powerful lens by which *some* Calvinisms find their way into American society. And they do so in such a way that both republicans and democrats, conservatives and liberals, communists and capitalists, secularists and proponents of religiosity... all end up wearing party hats and blowing horns at the same party without realizing it. Using the birthday party metaphor: they are all trying to get the seat at musical chairs, pin the tail on the donkey; and swing the bat that breaks the piñata. Every side is posturing, positioning, competing; but they're really all celebrants, in many anthropological aspects of consideration, of the same commerce and fellowship; they just don't realize it to be so.

To help sort this out, one is petitioned to kindly contemplate a very old wine being presently opened to breathe; and then to be poured into a goblet of today's bathing sunlight. What of the old rationality of belief in God? Or its counterpart, the rationality of atheism? Without a brief but thorough analysis of theistic belief how could anyone possibly understand the processes of thought that generates belief in Christianity? How could anyone discern Calvin's ideas without a rudimentary understanding of theistic intellectualism? How might someone find a vantage point, viewing how all these Calvinisms touch society if they lack a philosophical purview that acknowledges the possibility of the existence of a transcendent God? If one cannot attain at least, the foggiest of notions about the viability of theism; then the potency (good or bad) of Calvinism in Europe or the Americas will be left for more clever minds and hearts to discover. Therefore, this critique and discussion resolves not to leave this task to some unnamed successors. Not all of the faults of humanity and its many troubles and

challenges can be resolved by derived understandings of past failed historys; but at the least, some of them can. In the spirit of that endeavor, this chapter will take up the precepts of theism as it applies generally to the Abrahamic traditions, and specifically, to Christianity.

Is it rational to believe in God? Is someone irrational if they do not believe in God? Can a person be thinking clearly if their thinking leads them to atheism? The answer is yes, yes, and yes. That odd response may seem conflicted, yet rational people can believe things sanely that are clearly insane (objectively aimed at both sides of the issue). If the intellectual tools (premises) are given to someone to use in their contemplative exercises and they are fallacious, incomplete, or inadequate they will correctly conclude incorrectly. Psalms 14:1 says “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” If the Bible is a construct of divine origin; then is God saying that people are stupid who don’t believe in him? Once someone has spiritually met God it is easy for them to smile and intellectually put atheism in the genre of the annoying gnat that won’t leave one alone at a picnic; but then as the realization that all of humanity is in the same boat, so to speak, a person comes to sense that in some spiritual way, if they have been graced by God’s friendship; they tend to become less condescending and more grateful. One begins to realize how everyone are fools until we stop allowing ourselves to be fooled. Will not a theist and an atheist both agree with that comment? They only disagree on the premise. Yet both believe things based on subjective learning, understanding, and personally perceived experiences.

Recall once again, the oft quoted 1882 contemplations of a Lutheran minister's son; a former soldier in the Prussian army turned philosopher who made a bold declarative,

Where is God gone?' he (a madman) called out. I mean to tell you! We have killed him, - you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction? - for even Gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!³⁵

Of course, Friedrich Nietzsche an atheist, was arguably speaking of his shining hope for humanity's sociological evolution into something more in the face of modernity's coming technological contribution to culture. Nietzsche's belief that the ingenious devices being invented at that time would better humanity's plight. Humankind would no longer need God or religion to help them with hope or finding meaning in life. Though modernity's sun was just rising; Nietzsche's track of thought was but a theoretical bulwark originating in Hegelian intellectualism. Robert R. Williams' 2012 work, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* demonstrates Hegel's posit of the inseparability of love and anguish (a dualistic construct taken from Kant's earlier cue) becomes the lens by which "Hegel criticizes modern culture for its vacillation between optimism and despair, of which the dialectic of civil

³⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and Walter Arnold Kaufmann, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 181.

society is an example. The disintegration of civil society into the extremes of wealth and poverty tends to separate love from anguish and anguish from love.”³⁶ In a general sense, Hegel believed that God and religion are humanly contrived constructs to temporarily absolve humanity for crimes against itself; that the divine was something to hope in as humanity matured sociologically. But in time, humanity would throw off this childish way of seeing existence and would mature into a self sustaining and self perpetuating existence. This has long been read as a gradual societal evolution; but Williams reading of Hegel is that “World history is not a progressive elimination of evil, but rather a slaughterhouse. Evil and destruction remain permanent possibilities.”³⁷

For Nietzsche, human beings were headed in a direction of anthropological transcendence. His doctrine of eternal return would replace God at the top of the intellectual food chain with this new and improved humanity that “studies war no more.”³⁸ As such, they would have no more use for such crutches as religion. Belief in God would join the genre of those living their lives by magic, shamans, and superstitions. Overarching themes of believing in a supreme power; not to mention the imperative of human connectivity to that power to find meaning in existence, was outdated because humanity would become the new deity. Had Nietzsche remembered what his father had likely preached he would most certainly have taken note of an earlier incident where replacing God had been tried before; an endeavor that didn’t end well for Lucifer.

Nietzsche’s dimly lit lantern of eternal return dispelled ever so slightly, the icy blackness of his contemplations. How might someone put a positive twist on the

³⁶ Robert R. Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 27.

³⁷ Williams, 28

³⁸ Isaiah 2:4

inevitable and necessary consequence of atheism? To deny the existence of God means that there is but one destiny for the human being: ultimate oblivion. But how can that dish be served up more palatably? Alas, the best that can be done is the old posit of legacy; that future generations will say it's better for us now because of what they did back then. But that is still little comfort in the nothingness of oblivion. Even so, the sound of Nietzsche's footfalls of thought crunched forward across the cultural tundra as he followed in the already disappearing tracks of Hegel and Marx, who in turn, plodded across this hopeless wasteland by an occasional flickering of the candlelight of enlightenment atheists such as d'Holbach and Hume who had gone before them. Nietzsche and his predecessors were being guided forward anthropologically by retracing the steps of others who were no more. This all sounds pretty bleak; perhaps because it is pretty bleak. Yet despite it all, the same Hegelian conceived, Nietzsche propagated - aspirations for atheism's view of a human matriculation towards transcendence continued despite the implosion of modernity's attempt to make it so. Twentieth century British philosopher and atheist Bertrand Russell's 1927 essay, *Why I'm not a Christian* gave Hegel another go, "Science can help us to get over this craven fear in which mankind has lived for so many generations. Science can teach us...no longer to look around for imaginary supports, no longer to invent allies in the sky, but rather to look to our own efforts here below to make this world a fit place to live in, instead of the sort of place that the churches in all these centuries have made it."³⁹ Again, it must be noted that this writing is only skirting the issue of atheism versus theism; the primary discussion to be considered here is the intellectual rationalism and thought that illuminates the skies of

³⁹ Bertrand Russell, *Why i Am Not a Christian: And Other Essays On Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 22.

these poles as their respective borealis; and further to show that just as the northern lights and southern lights, while as far away from each other as possible on earth, are still visible by means of the same magnetic influences deep within the earth; even so, the magnetic draw of transcendence emanates from deep within humanity's being. To either find God or displace him with one's self. And this is never so clear as by Calvin's posit in Christianity and deposit in American secularism.

It should be pointed out that Greek philosophers of first century Athens ironically, saw Christians as atheists. Christians worshiped a deity that could not be seen, measured, qualified, or quantified. Greek perspectives, while embracing the expected ethereality of belief in a deity, called for a mortal expressivity of some kind as well; be it in statuary, temple, or in the natural elements. A Greek god was a paradoxical conundrum. A god needed to be incomprehensibly comprehensible; quantifiably incalculable; yet humanly divine.

When Saul of Tarsus (later Paul the Apostle) gave his memorable address on Mars Hill by the acropolis in Athens he caused quite a stir. "Athens in the Hellenistic period established itself as a centre of culture and philosophy of international status. Epicurean and Stoic schools were now added to the Platonic Academy and the Aristotelian Lyceum."⁴⁰ So when Paul announced that he would reveal the identity of an unknown god who was really the only one of consequence; a crowd quickly gathered. His announcement of Jesus being God in human form; a human embodiment of God the Father manifested bodily made very good sense intellectually to many Greek intellectuals. Deified humans were always the fodder for good discussion, even for those who did not believe such a thing possible. But a scholarly uproar ensued, however, when

⁴⁰ N G. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 112.

Paul asserted that Jesus' had died on the cross and rose three days later. Coming back as spirit was once one thing; but for the body itself to be resurrected once dead...that was indeed something to talk about.

“According to Calvin, God made use of the idioms of ancient language and culture and in so doing ‘stooped down’ to the level of the audience, accommodating their limited ability in order to communicate with them.”⁴¹ And in fact, a delegation of Greeks traveled to Judea to meet Jesus as recorded in John 12. But for the academic world, a mixture of the philosophical and spiritual; the Jew's ethereal Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Christian's risen and ascended Messiah Jesus, now present by his Holy Spirit in every open heart, seemed to many Greeks, more a philosophy than a deity. These perceptions of worshiping something not seen on earth except in the changed behaviors of Christ's followers helped put Christianity in genre of atheism for some of the Greeks. They might have been able to wrap their head around a marble statue of Jesus coming to life easier than his dead body.

Rome's view of Christianity would ultimately be similar; although at the beginning, the Romans thought of the Christians as nothing more than a sect of Jews (clearly a view that was disturbing to the Jews). All Jews believed in a coming Messiah, that was not new. But these “Christian Jews” claimed that they had found him and he was here; a distinction that became charged as the traditional Jews kept to the ideas that they were God's people and no one else qualified. The Romans were not insulted and in no way threatened by a Jewish Messiah for Jews. Let the Jews think they are God's chosen so long as they keep to themselves, pay taxes, and don't make trouble. But the Christians

⁴¹ Christopher Elwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 52.

with their ideas of Jews, Greeks, Romans, and anyone for that matter, becoming a child of God? This was another matter altogether. Further, this sect was winning over large segments of the populace by their deeds of kindness. The Christians, like the Jews were peaceful; they also paid taxes; but they did not keep to themselves. And more, their belief in Jesus overcoming death, hell, and the grave? These thoughts invalidated the culture upon which Rome itself was built. How could Jupiter or Mercury compete with eye-witness accounts of dozens of people who had actually gone on record as seeing Jesus alive after they had seen him die on the cross. Some of them had actually talked with him. The Emperor Julian wrote of Christians as *impious Galileans*⁴², some translate his Latin comment as *atheistic Galileans*. In a letter he wrote to the high priest of Galatia exhorting him not to be outdone by the Christians in caring for the poor and hence, cause the population to turn to Jesus from the traditional gods of Rome.

But it was this same fear, that of having the culture pulled out from underneath them, that had earlier threatened the Pharisaical sect of the the Jewish Sanhedrin. While the Sadducees, also a major sect in the Jewish Sanhedrin, did not believe in a bodily resurrection; some of them were open to the idea that maybe they had been wrong. Some were even starting to ask, would it be so bad if Jesus might be the Messiah? But the Pharisees were determined to keep Judaism and the celebrants of Judaism, separate from the rest of the world. They had built up a sociological religious Rabbinical system that stood apart from the Torah yet assimilated it and existed alongside it, often in contradiction to its precepts. Jesus was despised by the Pharisees in particular, as he was constantly exposing the frailty and hypocrisy of their logic and conflicted systems of

⁴² Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen, Comprising a History of the Church, from A.d.324 to A.d.440 with a Memoir of the Author....* by Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople: Tr. from the Greek (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855), 229.

thought and practice. While Jesus was kind and tolerant of individuals; he purposefully undermined Pharisaical culture. Jesus' rational arguments demonstrating the unjust inequities of Rabbinical law in conflict with the Law of Moses shook the foundations of the Pharisaical way of life. This way of life had them at the top of the societal food chain in terms of position, prestige, money, and power. This is why Jesus had to die. This is arguably why Jesus can't be the Messiah for many Jews today. What is germane here are the contemplations of how, anthropologically and sociologically, Jesus threatened the man-made, add-ons of Rabbinical Judaism to the Torah. It must be noted that adherents of Judaism would likely be insulted and threatened by such as an assertion; that Rabbinical Judaism is an "add-on". So that harsh declarative, while true, can be softened by the equally true recognition that many of the Rabbis of the rabbinical system, then and now, have faithfully dedicated their lives and ministries to the proper interpretation of the Torah with a benevolent and selfless agenda of helping the Jewish community with the application of their interpretations of the Torah. A similar sociological phenomenon occurred fifteen hundred years later when the human-made religious aspects of Catholicism were exposed and challenged by Luther just as Jesus had challenged the rabbinical system.

The same fear of diminishment and loss within a religious microculture; as well as a loss of individual importance within that religious construct, would reappear once again in Calvin's Geneva. Any dissonance might bring about a forfeiture of influence for the hierarchy there as well. But there was a big difference with Calvin's followers from the Catholics or the Pharisees. Thanks to Calvin's brilliant and rational theological system; for the first time in this long history, a threatened religious culture could take

action against the threat and at the same time could rationally defend itself. It could theologically be substantiated and enabled to push back by using the Bible, a recognized text of divine origin which meant God could be said to be on their side and no one could disprove them. The hypocrisy of the Sanhedrin could not be denied. The cruelty of the Romans could not be dismissed; the arrogance of Catholics could not be contested. But with Calvin's theological system, the Bible could be read, interpreted, and applied, and arguably warped; so as to give viability to the ethics of segregation, marginalization, and even militarization by those who deem it advantageous to apply it so.

Constantine decreed Christianity was politically acceptable in the third century yet he could not validate the morality of Roman conduct as it was in conflict with Christ.

In 1095 Pope Urban II appealed to Christianity to launch the Crusades; yet his ethics and morality are held in contempt by history as they were inconsistent with Jesus' spiritual crusades of love and kindness to others. But Calvin, and more still, his descendants, could use his very rational theological system to mediate for ethics and morality of Christian humanism. Calvin's theology conjoined subjective readings of Jesus with specific matters of immediacy; matters that might otherwise threaten a status quo of Christian religiosity and undermine the security of certain individuals who were privileged in their so-called Christian microcultures; whether in Geneva, Plymouth, Salem, or Washington D.C. In the prelude of the United States bloody Civil War, Evangelical ministers in the south quoted New Testament scriptures to validate the Confederacy and the institution of slavery. For example, Peter and Paul both wrote about the conduct of slaves. Paul told the Christians in Colossae, "Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eyeservice, as people-

pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.”⁴³ Of course, Jesus never advocated for slavery, and taken in the proper context, Paul is simply recognizing the reality of a Roman culture predicated on slavery. He was not saying accept slavery because it was alright. He was trying to encourage a Christ-like response to it; one that would demonstrate love for hate, excellence for incompetence, kindness for cruelty; that overtime, the slave’s master would be compelled to take note of the slave’s distinctly good behavior and quality of spirit, and that eventually the master would himself accept Christ, leading to a potential emancipation of the slave. Did this always happen? Of course not. When a person is “born again” theologically, they are instantly cleansed from the effect of sin and they can rightfully enter the presence of a perfect God. But that person’s nature to keep sinning remains. That’s why forgiveness must be ongoing and the rest of the person’s life is spent in pursuit of taking on, not only Christ’s righteousness, but hopefully, his character of holiness ultimately. This is what the Bible actually teaches. Yet, by twisting Calvin’s reading just a little; it could be made to justify slavery and politically galvanize southern sympathy to rebel against the Union. In the Civil War there were certainly decent people on both sides of the conflict who cared about ending slavery; but the Calvin affect is picked up in the South’s state’s rights argument for cessation; and in the north it was seen in the argument for the preservation of the Union against cessation. The arguments for the Civil War masked the ugly truth as do the arguments for and against Christianity in America today; that it’s not really about belief in God, religious freedom, or the preservation of constitutional viability; it is the perpetuation of a sociological system that takes on a life of its own by giving people significance within it. What does all this have to do with the question of whether it is

⁴³ Colossians 3:22

rational to believe in God? The ongoing debate between atheism and theism, creation and science, Darwinism and the Genesis account; very much show signs of this same effect. For example, a 2013 World Science Festival published an interview with notable atheist, Richard Dawkins (an evolutionary biologist and author known for his dedication to Darwinian evolutionary theory) who was asked about *why* the notion of a creator (God) constituted such a big problem for him and to atheism as a whole. His response was not a defense of Darwin's theory, the fossil record, or a moral agenda of truth-telling as one might suppose based on past assertions of many atheists. Dawkins fascinating answer demonstrated that he was capable of a degree of objectivity and that he could at least orally state his unscientific motive for choosing atheism. It was simply that

if there is a supernatural, superhuman intelligence that worked it all out; in a way that undermines the entire scientific enterprise, because we are ...maybe, maybe and evolutionary biologist feels more strongly. The whole enterprise of evolutionary biology is to explain how you get prodigious complexity and design from virtually nothing. (And we hand over to physicists when we can go from the virtually nothing to the absolutely nothing.) (audience laughter) But if you start from an advanced level, say bacteria, and work up to mammals and humans we have a working theory... that we know is true... which explains how you can go from great simplicity to prodigious complexity and finally, to the sort of complexity that is capable of designing things; of creating things. Of working out how to do things. Well, if you are suddenly going to insert a designing machine, a creator, an intelligence...at the root of the universe. You've just undermined your entire enterprise. Because your entire enterprise has been to explain how you get to something complicated enough to do design.⁴⁴

Important to this discussion is not so much Dawkins' atheism but the invalidation of what he calls "the biological evolutionary enterprise." The concern or fear, is not whether there is or is not a God in Heaven; but that of having this atheistic, Dawkinsian *enterprise* undermined here on earth. Of course Dawkins sincerely believes in the theory

⁴⁴ Richard Dawkins, interviewed by Brian Greene, New York, NY, December 16, 2013.

of evolution itself; but his defence of it is not because of the facts one way or the other. After a century and a half, Darwinism has been unable to escape the genre of theoretical science. Why? Because the science does not give it credence to officially move it from theoretical to empirical. Darwinists have taught it as science for nearly a hundred years. The scientific academic culture and community that has come into existence through Darwinism; has made careers, lives, money, chairs of academic importance and so forth. The underlying motive of wanting the truth to come out may actually be present; but that motive is subjugated and subordinated to its propagation not its validation. And via the Calvinistic lenses, it is seen through a mixture of good and bad, right and wrong, truth and lies. The desire to scientifically crusade for truth is only for the recruitment poster. The greater motive for wanting Darwin to be right is from the fear of what will happen to “our” culture if Darwin is proven incorrect. No one wants to be wrong. No one wants to think that their lives, academic studies, interests, and preoccupations might be for naught. So the sociological push back is a natural response. And that desire not to see one’s life as wasted is not evil incarnate. Ironically, the same twisting of Calvin used to galvanize science and secularism against evangelical Christianity is simply reversed by some elements of evangelicalism and fired right back at science and secularism. There are those in evangelical Christianity (just some), who stand for God’s existence, not because they have had a personal experience with God and subsequently stand for truth; but rather they fear that if Darwinism and atheism were true they would have invested their lives in their own futile enterprise. They are not really concerned about the God in heaven as they are themselves, the gods here on earth. Many evangelical Christians seem to behave as if they have forgotten that God is a big boy and can take of himself. They are afraid that an

atheist might seem to have a better answer to a question in a debate; or a Darwinists fossil might seem a more viable evidence than one a creationist might offer. Atheists come and go; yet God is still here from the standpoint of the vast majority of people on earth. This effect itself does not originate with Calvin but it is given theological justification by specific twisted readings of his theology.

Again, this is the distinction to be noted in the Pharisaical community of Rabbinical leaders who were not nearly so concerned about the Law of Moses as they were about a potential loss of their familiar and comfortable way of life at the top of their social order. The same can be said for the Catholic resentment of Luther. They really had no biblical defence for selling indulgences and telling uneducated people their relatives would never get out of purgatory unless they bought one, as they knew well. Recall the aforementioned Bedier of Montaigu College, who was greatly influential in both Calvin's intellectual and spiritual formation. He taught theology, the Bible, and Christian spirituality but, if those themes seemed to come into conflict with the lifestyle, finance, convenience, or prestige of the Parisian theological community; which was giving recognition, funding, and posts of influence and power to its adherents; then culture wins and Jesus loses. And later still, as Calvin's transplanted successors were similarly threatened in the American colonies, thanks to Calvin's legal lensed theology, they could use the Bible to validate and substantiate their positions with near irrefutable arguments grounded in scripture. These were more than happy to assert this theological influence into the civil and private lives of individuals. And history shows that they frequently did so in the many accounts of exiled dissenting voices being sent into the American wilderness without provision or protection; or burning people at the stake for being a

witch because they disagreed with the powers that be about the meaning of a particular passage of scripture.

What is being asserted here is that this contorted Calvinism, part correct, part distorted, in some cases: perverted, is still after all, a theological construct of Christian theism, and it is being used today to substantiate a religious system of Christianity that is more humanity than Christ; more sociological than theological. And at the very same time, the same system is religiously supporting atheism, under the auspices of science as it religiously perpetuates American secularism by appealing to popular themes of inequity with other traditions and social injustice for the “other” than Christianity by using this renamed Christian religiosity as its justification.

Biblical and Christian semantics have simply been replaced with more pluralistically satiable expressions that are appreciated as being politically correct.

It is a significant irony in Judaism in the Old Testament (the Torah) that no one could be a child of God without being a Jew. Subsequently, in the first few years after Jesus, this same view is pervasive in Christianity. All the followers of Jesus in the first year after Christ’s resurrection were Jewish. The mindset was a Jewish Messiah could only be for the Jews. But the Torah makes it very clear from the beginning, that God’s plan has always been to affect positive change in the world through a universal Messiah. In Genesis 12:3, God told Abram “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”⁴⁵ One needs to see the object of this divine declarative. It is not the traditional Jewish emphasis on “I will bless those who bless you.” Nor the Calvinist emphasis on “and him who dishonors you I will curse,” but the real purpose of God is being laid out in the last

⁴⁵ Genesis 12:3

phrase: “and in you (Abram) all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The word translated here into English as “families” is the Hebrew word, מִשְׁפָּחָה, transliterated: mishpâchâh, pronounced in English: mish-paw-khaw' defined as the nuclear family: father, mother, and child or it can have a much broader meaning; and so it does here, as it applies to people groups and or nations.

Consider the historical Old Testament book of I Kings: Elijah the prophet is sent by God into the wilderness for an extended period. The scriptures states that God provided for him by sending ravens to fly over him and drop food from their talons for him to eat. Aside from the fascinating miraculous aspects of the narrative, the point here is that the Levitical law specifically mentions the raven as an unclean bird (Leviticus 11:15); yet here in the same Old Testament, God uses the unclean raven to feed his prophet. What is going on here? God is demonstrating that the Law is not actually about what one must do to be holy; but to show that no one can do enough to be holy. The Law of Moses is impossible to keep for a single human being all of the time. God gave humanity the Levitical law to purposefully create a conundrum, as if to say, “Here’s something you can’t do.” The idea of the Law given in the Torah is to reveal a perfect God’s demand for perfection; yes, but it was never to give any person the idea they could rise to that perfection by keeping the Law because no one could. God is Holy and humanity is never holy enough. As humanity comes to a full realization of this, throwing up their hands so to speak and saying, “What can we do?” A rational path of thinking becomes psychologically available. One sees the need for a savior who can justify the person who can’t justify his or herself by keeping the law of Moses.

God's next directive to Elijah is to leave the wilderness to travel to Sidon (Lebanon) where a non-Jewish widow provides for him by cooking him a meal, using the last of her resources. The point here is God is showing Jews studying the Old Testament that his plans for human reconciliation did not end with them; but rather his plans began through them and extend to all the world and are meant for all the world.

Jesus' disciple Peter, a Jew, thought of the Messiah in Jewish terms until he had his famed vision of "unclean animals being let down from heaven on a sheet".

In Acts 10 God showed him that even non-kosher foods could be made holy if God so deemed. Peter realized then it was God's intention to make everyone *kosher*; to redeem all of humanity; not just Jews.

God had always allowed for the foreigner to join Israel. The Bible never excluded anyone from involvement or participation. The only prerequisite to friendship with God was the imperative that it must be on the creator's terms, not the created's whims or subjective preferences.

In the Old Testament that meant a conversion to Judaism; in the New Testament it means receiving Jesus as the Messiah and thus, the Savior. So then for Judaism, Catholicism, Lutheranism, and even Calvin; everyone can be saved but for Calvin, only those that God has predestined constitute the "everyone". Whereas for Luther, God has predestined literally everyone or anyone who makes it their personal choice to choose that predestined destiny of God.

But returning to the question of whether it is rational to believe in God, the following proposition is then submitted: If one cannot have or describe an anthropological cohesion, sociological construct of community, or culture without a

theological mechanization of expressing that system, whatever the semantic or name for it, then is it rational to say there is no God?

Or, reframing the question more simply, If atheism can't substantiate its validity without using logic and reason originating from theism then is atheism not by default invalid?

Consider then, another example of this argument. Calvin ran into a roadblock in his theological studies that he either could not, or would not, reconcile as Luther and Augustine had done so before him. The roadblock was in reference to the aforementioned question dating back through the ages of philosophical antiquity. And, though this question is largely thought to be contemporary, is frequently asked and posted on social media by millennials everywhere as though their generation has attained a new level of intellectualism and come up with it the first time. This question is one of the overarching columns supporting American ideas of relativism, pluralism, and postmodernism. "If there is a God; and if God is good, how can this all powerful and all good God exist concurrently with all the evil in the world?" The definition of "God" necessarily calls for this being to be transcendent, and thus, all knowing, all powerful, and all present. Theologically these attributes are expressed in God's being as his omnipotence (all powerfulness), his omniscience (all knowing-ness), and omnipresence (everywhere present simultaneously). As God is all knowing, then "God" sees all injustice, inequity, and evil in the world. As God is all powerful; and most importantly, if God is good (as right trumps might); then it is God's moral obligation to use his power to stop the evil and prevent the damage it causes. And, as God is everywhere at the same time, resolving the damage of evil to the world should be no problem at all.

Yet humanity continues to survey a world filled with starving children, inadequate drinking water, famine and disease, continuous conflict and war, cancer, aids, racism and bigotry, elephants and rhinos being killed for their ivory etc. etc. And so this generation asks the question, does not the evidence of this present and active evil in the world demonstrate then, that there can be no powerful, all good God in existence? For if God existed wouldn't God have already stopped the madness?

To the average person this is a question that has not been answered, at least not well. To the atheist it confirms their assertions that there is no God. Theists may say there is a God; but there are things that we don't fully understand and we must have faith that in the end God will help us.

Calvin's solution to this problem holds up under the critiques of theology, rationality, and philosophy, yet it becomes challenged and has often been argued against over the last five centuries as it does not always hold up biblically, morally, or ethically in the purview of Jesus' ideology. Calvin's solution is essentially that evil exists not as an entity but as a possibility. Certain people are good and certain people are bad so that the good can be distinguished from the bad. And it is this question (how can there be a good God when bad things happen) that is the heart of the heart of the vortex of truth and meaning; the one that is being forced through a single, paradoxical lens and used evidentially for centuries by atheists to say there is no God. Instead it will be used here presently, to demonstrate just the opposite; to rationally prove the existence of God by simply raising again, the battle-worn ensign of intellectual reason skyward once

more, crying out as did Shakespeare's Henry, "once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more!"⁴⁶

Calvin determined that bad people and bad things exist because God wanted to separate the good people from the bad. This is partly taken from Augustine's idea that evil is not a thing. Augustine tackled the issue of how can there be a good God if there is evil in the world in 397 A.D. with his 13 part autobiography that became known as his "Confessions". This is his summarized answer.

It was further made clear to me that things prone to destruction are good, since this destructibility would be out of the question if they were either supremely good or not good at all; because if they were supremely good they would be indestructible, whereas if they were not good at all there would be nothing in them that could be destroyed. Destruction is obviously harmful, yet it can do harm only by diminishing the good; this conclusion is beyond cavil. If, however, they lose all their good, they will not exist at all, for if they were to continue in existence without being any longer subject to destruction, they would be better, because permanently indestructible; and what could be more outrageous than to declare them better for having lost everything that was good in them? However, if they are deprived of all good; they will simply be non-existent; and so it follows that as long as they do exist, they are good? Everything that exists is good, then; and so evil, the source of which I was seeking, cannot be of substance, because if it were, it would be good. Either it would be an indestructible substance, and that would mean it was very good indeed, or it would be a substance liable to destruction- but then it would not be destructible unless it were good. I saw, then, for it was made clear to me, that you have made all good things, and there are absolutely no substances that you have not made. I saw too, that you have not made all things equal. They all exist because they are severally good but collectively very good, for our God has made all things exceedingly good. For you, evil has no being at all, and this is true, not of yourself only, but of everything you have created, since apart from you, there is nothing that could burst in and disrupt the order you have imposed on it.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ William Shakespeare, *Henry V: The Life of Henry the Fifth*, The Shakespeare Folios (London: Nick Hern Books, 2001), 65.

⁴⁷ Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: New City Press, 1990-2005), 174.

In essence, Augustine is saying that God has created all things (which John also says in his Gospel in the first chapter), and that nothing (no thing) that God has created is evil. Therefore evil cannot be a created thing.

Calvin builds on this but then inserts a twist of legality.

It is evident, therefore that Satan is under the power of God, and is so ruled by His authority, that he must yield obedience to it. Moreover, though we say that Satan resists God, and does works at variance with His works, we at the same time maintain that this contrariety and opposition depend on the permission of god. I now speak not of Satan's will and endeavor, but only of the result. For the disposition of the devil being wicked, he has no inclination whatever to obey the divine will, but on the contrary, is wholly bent on contumacy and rebellion. This much, therefore, he has himself, and his own iniquity, that he early, and of set purpose, opposes God, aiming at those things which he deems most contrary to the will of God. But as God holds him bound and fettered by the curb of his power he executes those things only for which permission has been given him, and thus, however unwilling, obeys his Creator, being forced, whenever he is required, to do Him service. For the devil is said to have undisputed possession of this world until he is dispossessed by Christ. In like manner, he is said to blind all who do not believe the Gospel, and to do his own work in the children of disobedience. And justly; for all the wicked are vessels of wrath, and, accordingly, to who should they be subjected but to the minister of the divine vengeance? In fine, they are said to be of their father the devil. For as believers are recognised to be the sons of God by bearing his image, so the wicked are properly regarded as the children of Satan, from having degenerated into his image.⁴⁸

While Calvin seems to agree with Augustine that evil is not created, neither he nor Augustine give a completely satisfying expression of evil's disposition in eternity going back or going forward; at least not one that would seem to respond to the dynamics of how the twenty-first century might be interested. And it is the matter of the eternal disposition of evil that is one of the keys in resolving the problem of evil. Calvin posits humanity's plight to be a malevolent beneficence of Satan.

⁴⁸ JOHN CALVIN, *INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION* (S.I.: LULU COM, 2016), 78-79.

Yet Satan did not originate evil; he chose the paradigm of evil in defiance of God. So what Calvin says is accurate biblically, yet it does not respond to the whole issue; and his intellectualism subsequently leaves certain human beings in hell because they are created as children of God's wrath. Their only function in creation is to stand as other to God's elect (as Calvin calls them) in order to amplify the beauty of God in his chosen. Once they (the children of wrath) have accomplished that purpose they are discarded and remitted to the flames of perdition. If Lucifer had originated evil then there might be a rational argument for this position. But again, he did not. Lucifer is a created being; and it was his choice to engage evil; a possibility that already existed. How does one know it already existed; because Lucifer chose it by shifting his allegiance from God's goodness to that which was not God...evil.

Nietzsche was far more elegant in his expressions of language than Hegel; more eloquently spoken than Marx. His near romantic style of writing was beautifully poetic in many ways; and hence, the significance of Nietzsche's assertion that human behavior is a necessary consequence of the influence of human speech; which is nothing more than an external audible construct of human thought. And that is not only theistic but is Christian spirituality and intellectualism. Jesus said as much, "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."⁴⁹ But despite Nietzsche's *faith* for mankind's post-theistic future as he watched modernity's sunrise; the cold light of day was to cast only dark shadows over yet another chapter of intellectual failure in seeing humanity change from its barbarous ways.

⁴⁹ Luke 6:45

As to how this relates to Calvin's affect on society and the rationalization of theism; It is not the discussion of whether Nietzsche, Hegel, Marx, or any atheist for that matter, is correct about their atheism; The issue here is whether it is rational to consider the existence of God. In the context of Calvin, the question becomes paramount if his influence is of the magnitude being asserted here. Was Calvin rational to believe in God? As to whether it is rational for anyone to believe in God; atheists expectedly argue "no" it is not rational. But surprisingly, perhaps astonishingly so, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, are about to be shown here as "yes" voters on that role call. No, there is no claim being made here that they were closet theists. They clearly denied God's existence by their own attestations; yet *what* they affirm in their atheistic disbelief is done so via a rationality of theistic faith. So in terms of their rationalizations about the existence of God their lips say no, but their eyes say yes. Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and atheism in general, historically agree that faith, religion, and theism are rational constructs of the human mind. For Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche it was not simply whether God existed; but the intellectual consideration/belief itself which they found engaging. This is one reason (not the only one) that atheists, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, and theologians still argue, discuss, and debate the existence of God.

A paramount challenge for these three musketeers of atheism, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, was that they suffered from the previously discussed erroneous assumption that religion is necessarily connected with God. From the biblical construct of intellectualism, God's view of human religiosity might be puzzling for many people to hear as this religious-God of the Bible mindset is so prevalent. How God might actually respond to the issue, as posited from scripture, paints a surreal picture. One

might see Jesus smiling at Hegel; patting Marx on the shoulder; and inviting Nietzsche out for an espresso; telling them, “No you’re wrong about denying my existence; I’m right here and I do exist transcendentally over all things; but you chaps are absolutely spot on about religion. Your intellectual conundrum is that you keep associating me with the propagation of religion; and I abhor it! I detest religion for the very reasons you so intelligently and poetically enumerate!” And it is religion clothed in the veils of theism that is often the problem discussed by these atheists as they view society; perhaps the driving force behind their atheism. After considering Nietzsche’s “God is dead” thought; reflect on Marx’s equally famous 1844 essay in which he asserts religion,

is the *fantastic realization* of the human essence since the *human essence* has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle *against that world* whose spiritual *aroma* is religion. *Religious* suffering is, at one and the same time, the *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.⁵⁰

Marx’s real issue is not so much about belief in God; or whether Jesus is Lord of all; his issues are really found with human religiosity and the hypocrisy it has led to. Marx’s limited vantage point of reason caused him to put deism and religion in the same genre of intellectualism, which they are not. Nietzsche’s notion of God’s death at the hands of humanity has profound significance in the light of understanding Calvin and his overarching influence on America in the twenty-first century. How so, one might ask? Four hundred years after Calvin, Swiss theologian Karl Barth seemed finally to succeed in synthesizing Calvin’s brilliant logical systematization with Luther’s posit of Christ’s love and make some sense of it all. In Joseph McLelland’s, *Prometheus Rebound: The*

⁵⁰ Karl Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* 7, no. 10 (February 1844)

Irony of Atheism asserts “Barth’s thesis concerning the rationality of belief turns on his familiar insistence on the *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) of Anselm as the way of theology. Anselm’s intellectualism emanates from Augustine’s thoughts centuries earlier still; “For there are some things which we do not believe unless we understand them, and there are other things which we do not understand unless we believe them.”⁵¹ For Barth, “the Christian ‘thinks’ rationally in the wake of the act and word of the living God...and ‘mere human autonomy remains incompetent and impossible in relation to the living God because it is blind.’”⁵² Barth’s *The Christian Life* posits “the atheistic negation applies to a ‘God’ who, if he exists, must do so in the same way as the data of other human experience or the contents of other human reflection exist for people. The true and living God, however, is not a ‘datum’ of ours. He is his own ‘datum’. Only thus, only as he is his own ‘datum’ and reveals himself, is he there for men.”⁵³

Take note that it is not just what is said that communicates the intended message; but it is how things are said that give it the meaning intended by the sender. It is not simply the words being spoken or written, but the way in which they are expressed; the phrasing, the eye contact, the tonal qualities; all of these can create either clear commonalities or great disparities between the intent of a thought, word, or writing, and the final landing place of the message conveyed. Without an explanation and/or context

⁵¹ Francesca Aran Murphy, *Illuminating Faith: An Invitation to Theology*, Illuminating Modernity (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 12.

⁵² Joseph C. McLelland, *Editions SR*, vol. 10, *Prometheus rebound: the irony of atheism* (Waterloo, Ont.: Published for the Canadian Corp. for Studies in Religion/Corporation canadienne des sciences religieuses by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), 289.

⁵³ Karl Barth, *The Christian Life* (London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 128.

of Nietzsche's thoughts about the death of God being spoken about by his imagined mad man, one could make a case that Nietzsche himself was suffering from insanity.

God is dead? To say the word "God" signifies transcendence; meaning outside of human existence. God is above it, through it, and over it in terms of place and power in an eternal sense. God is the origin of life therefore, God can't die as God is life. And if God did cease to exist then humanity would not be left to have a discussion about the matter as it too, would cease to exist. So if "God" is dead, then whoever Nietzsche identified as God could never have been God. Whoever Nietzsche's unclaimed corpse (his divine John Doe is in the morgue of deities) - all one can say, is if he's dead then he wasn't God. Therefore, Nietzsche was either wrong about God being dead; or he has mistaken the identity of the individual who is dead for God. Either way, Nietzsche was wrong; and subsequently his prophetic posit of man becoming god-like was fallacious as it was entrenched in his erroneous premise about who God is and by what his being is constituted. His predictions for modernity would consequently end in error.

God is still very much alive and present (the vast majority of people in the world still believe in God) and the only one who is actually dead is Nietzsche.

Early twentieth century German intellectual, Martin Heidegger, another atheist or very nearly an atheist, (depending on who one listens to) , wrote a seminal work on "being". *Being and Time* was constructed around a very common German word, "Sein" which effectively means "be" or "exist". The thought is not so much the idea of "being" human; but to understand what it is to be human. This is achieved by understanding what it is like to be a human; in other words, understand the things that humans do will show what a human "being" actually is.

Heidegger places the German “Da” (there) in front of “be” to convey the thought of what it means to *be there* in the human state. “Dasein” is then a ringside seat to see what it is like to be there in the human state of being. “But in significance itself, with which Dasein is always familiar, there lurks the ontological condition which makes it possible for Dasein, as something which understands and interprets, to disclose such things as ‘significations’; upon these, in turn, is founded the Being of words and of language.”⁵⁴

In short Heidegger’s ideas about ‘being’ don’t seem to be inclusive of a transcendent being like God; yet in fact, the entire concept of Dasein is itself entity-like with theological overtones that smack of deistic conceptualism. Dasein, for Heidegger, is ontologically a standard of excellence. It is a benchmark for judging what is or what is not. Heidegger, very much as a deist does, no matter the tradition, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, or Muslim; upholds “dasein” as a pre-existing (from where no one knows) intellectual construct. It is an idea that just exists; a standard by which other ideas or things are judged, identified, and signified. And this signification is by use of speech and language (spoken or written). So then the question of whether it is rational to believe in God might be taken up in this proposition: If an idea itself cannot be conceived in the mind without speaking to one’s self in their own mind; and if that idea or concept cannot be expressed to others except by words spoken or written that were conceived in the mind of the speaker or writer; and if the idea, either spoken or written, cannot be signified without identifying it in contrast with other ideas previously existing to it; which serve as

⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward S. Robinson (New York: HarperPerennial/Modern Thought, 2008), 119.

standards of being that already exist; then have not the atheists merely expressed their atheistic ideas in deistic conceptualisms? The names, semantics, and ideas of God are removed; yet the intellectual mechanisms of concept; one by which those ideas of atheism are expressed to show there is no God, are stated theologically as an acknowledgement of God's Being. If one cannot say that God does not exist without using God to prove the point; has not one just proved the existence of God in trying to disprove his existence? As an example, fast forward to the 1960's and it is commonplace to see and hear theistic terminology and semantics to describe atheistic intellectualism. In 1963 Marxist, Ignace Lepp's seminal book, *Atheism in our Time: A Psychoanalyst's Dissection of the Modern Varieties of Unbelief* describes his rationale for using the word *soul*, "It was merely a convenient term to designate the totality of man's psychic faculties. I adopted the position of all materialists: the soul and what we call the spiritual are not essentially different from the biological or physical; they merely represent a superior level of the evolution of matter."⁵⁵ Basically there is no way to communicate human being without communicating God being. The linguistic tool is not because the thought is not; and the thought is not because God is.

So the question can be argued at the least, that Heidegger's *Dasein* is doing the this very thing; and thus, *Dasein* is an ontological construct that can only exist, or "be" because of its theological deistic underpinnings.

Certainly this does not conclude the ongoing discussion between atheism and deism; but it responds to the rationalization and intellectualism of both. As to the resolution of the problem of evil, as said previously, humanity is in a position to consider history in the purview of two millennia of Christianity; a vantage point that is distinctly

⁵⁵Ignace Lepp, *Atheism in Our Time* (New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1964).

superior from that of intellectual queries of earlier times; though the inquisitors of those times might have had superior intellects to those of today. So therefore, the irreconcilable problem of evil is finally reconciled by loading Abrahamic (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) theology, Christian spirituality, and biblical historicity into an Aristotelian cannon and firing on our ignorance.

God is...eternal. His being is eternal. That does not mean simply linearly from past to future but in endless conceptual paradigms that are beyond human comprehension. God was, is, and always will be, existent and sufficient within himself. What humanity calls, "The Universe" or as Einstein called it, "Spacetime" is a construct coming into existence in eternity; as a bubble of air in a bottomless ocean. The bubble takes up space in eternity and eternity is in the bubble; yet the bubble forms a temporary and artificial place that is momentarily isolated from eternity, though eternity can see the beginning and end of the bubble and every vantage point in between within the bubble from above, below, or even within; yet the contents of the bubble: the oxygen atoms, let's say, within are not cognisant or responsive necessarily to the eternal stimuli that is fathomless only millimeter away until the bubble bursts. Turning to another thought briefly: that the universe momentarily rendered here as a millimeter wide bubble in the eternal ocean depths: Look at the eternal God in eternity. He has always existed. Eternity is a concept itself that the human mind cannot comprehend; yet one only needs to look up at the night sky to see empirically that the concept of eternity has validity. For humanity, the universe is eternity, it can't be quantified or calculated. In reality, spacetime is only that bubble containing a trillion galaxies, each with a trillion stars, each with several planets orbiting them. Human thought processes break down and stop. There is an "error page" appearing in the human mind. It is beyond human purview.

The answer to the problem of evil is to realize that God exists (being) outside of spacetime, outside this humanly unquantifiable universe. And in this dimension of what the Bible calls the realm of the spirit (for God is a spirit, John 4) God desires a societal collective of beings that “are” because God “is”. They exist "are" as "beings" of communion, cohesion, cooperation, and, companionship with God. They "are" never independent of him, but exist in an eternal friendship with him because of him. Hence, God’s desire in Genesis, “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”⁵⁶ How does this answer and resolve the problem of evil? It really is quite simple. Humanity is created in the image of God; to be like him, ultimately to have their being with God and in God, in eternity. But God is eternal and humanity has not always existed, therefore, humanity must have a place outside of eternity to begin. Humanity could not begin in eternity because eternity has no beginning. Spacetime (AKA the universe) is an artificial, temporary construct existing as a bubble in an infinite ocean. It is still in eternity but distinctive from it. It is “an image” of eternity to humanity existing unquantifiably to it; and humanity exists in “an image of God” a God who is unquantifiable to them. The universe is best likened to the human womb. It is in the body of the mother, yet the future of the unborn child affords an image of the mother; even though the child cannot conceive of such a thing. And that unquantifiable concept of being in the mother’s image will someday permit that child to exist outside her body; to be beside the mother, a small yet unmistakable being that exists in its mother’s image.

⁵⁶ Genesis 1:16

The child did not exist with the mother in her existence past; but the womb gives the child a beginning place to come into being. Spacetime (the universe) does the same thing in a spiritual sense. It enables humanity a beginning. Humanity is not eternal in the past but it will be eternal in the future. If humanity existed outside spacetime then it would already be eternal. No one comes into being in eternity; there is only God. Therefore, humankind (if it were to fulfill God's design) would need a spiritual placenta, a womb in order to come into being in a spiritual sense. At a certain point of spiritual development, the placenta is discarded, as the human being is birthed into eternity. Humankind can then exist in eternity going forward. This is the context of creation; but this single verse in Genesis also addresses the question of the problem...about evil within that context. Calvin was right, as was Augustine. Evil is not a thing. It has always existed because God has always existed. If God has always been; and has always been good, then the possibility of evil necessarily exists in eternity or there would be no need for a designation of God; that he is...good. Genesis 1:16 says that God gave man "dominion" over the earth as he has dominion in eternity. So then the antithesis of that statement must also be true. An eternal existence of the possibility of evil, signifies its existence in distinction to God who is good. And therefore, evil in the world does not prove that there is not God; but rather it actually proves that God does exist. Evil's signification denotes its attribute of hatred in distinction to God's attribute of love; therefore, demonstrating that God is love and his love transcends hate, for God exists alone in eternity; therefore, with God's love (Jesus) it is possible for humanity to be good; to exist apart from hatred in peace. The word "dominion" has many layers and discussions; but in short, God gave full authority to man (and the use of the word "man", in Hebrew "Adam" denotes the species of both male and female). *Man* was given *dominion* over the earth and by

virtue of God's declarative; God has restricted his influence on earth, having transferred his authority to humanity. So then, God involves himself in the affairs of humanity only when he is petitioned and granted access by humanity according to a specific divine protocol. What would happen on earth would be in the hands of humanity. Clearly, that did not end well; but it will. This is why Jesus' lesson on how to pray, included "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."⁵⁷ As the effects of evil are clear to all; humanity is still not spiritually in a state of *being* as God is. Man is not existing so as to echo God's image of good yet. But if humanity is created to exist with God outside spacetime in eternity in friendship with him; then humankind must have complete authority to self-determine to be in that state of being. Just as God is good; man must have the authority to reason and choose whether it wants to "be" in a state of goodness. This is where Calvinism can get confusing. Calvin asserts the evil in the world exists in demonstration of God's goodness; and he is right it does do that. But that is not the primary reason the effects of evil are rampant on earth. In diametric opposition to Calvin; it's not about predestination of some people; but rather the self-determination of all people. God wants humanity in eternity as his friends. A friend is one that is chosen by another. Humans choose to be with each other or love each other. It can't be forced. The first Adam chose poorly. He surrendered his authority "dominion" over the earth to Lucifer. Lucifer is a slave to evil, he is driven by his passion to be in opposition to God who is good; man therefore, by virtue of his own choice to surrender his authority on earth and permit his authority and dominion over earth to be granted second-hand to Lucifer, humanity itself become slaves de facto, to evil as well. Enter Jesus, the universal Jewish Messiah, and by faith placed in his being and accomplishment, humanity regains

⁵⁷ Matthew 6:10

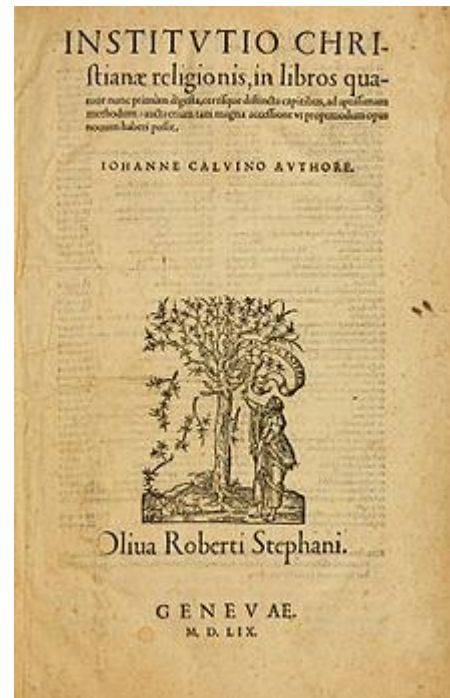
title to earth. To the extent that this choice prevails in the earth, “dominion” is taken back from Satan, and his nature of evil. Pockets of peace reign in those people and places. Yet thousands of years of bad choices and the subsequent ramifications of those choices that have exponentially rippled through humanity and its time on earth show the effects of evil everywhere; God has not failed to act; humanity has. God will act on behalf of humanity if granted proper access (faith in Christ - the divine protocol) but because of the willful choice of humanity to disavow God, this option for intervention on humanity’s behalf) Satan, (adversary) still runs rampant reeking havoc by virtue of human subjugation to his authority, given to him by humanity itself. Humankind is now compelled to propagate the effect of evil on earth as they are driven ever downward in the spiral of Dante’s inferno. This is the answer to the problem of evil and also to the question of why bad things happen to good people. In essence the matter of freewill, in contradiction to Calvin's posit of predestination, resolves the problem of evil. Additionally, it demonstrates rationally how and why evil can, and does exist alongside a good and transcendent God; and in doing so, is the rational argument for God’s existence. Finally, it reiterates an already demonstrated resolution to the continued destruction of evil. Problem of evil? Solved. Question? Answered. Solution Given? Jesus.

IV

How are Catholicism, Luther, and Calvinism contrasted in the context of Secularization in Academia and Science?

To intellectually grasp the conflicted and confused culture of America one must be sharp enough to see Calvin's influence. But also, recognize and identify what influenced Calvin. After all, he didn't get the thousand-plus pages of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* out of thin air. All those ideas come from somewhere.

His many contrasted understandings of the Bible and Christianity inundated his thinking as a youth and came from many directions to reach him; and in kind, those same conflicting process's of thought now reverberate from him in every direction. Some biblical, some not; some having a good result, some creating confusion, injustice, discrimination; and marginalization.



But what's different for Europe and the Americas than say, Rome, or ancient Israel was, for the first time, Calvin's proponents could distort Christianity, even pervert it, with the justification of an entire theological system to defend them from behind while propelling them forward; and often in a very unChrist-like manner. Those behaviors resulted in a society trying to absolve itself from past sins by eradicating the cultural memory of past moral failure. America's stature removals, Institutional name-changes,

or respinning historical events to whitewash any traceable elements that might be linked to the sins of the past; to “us”. Marilynne Robinson suggests American culture suffers from a past that cannot be reconciled with the “socially engineered” picture Hollywood, science, the media, and secularism have painted it to be. America really has “one story they tell themselves over and over, which is *once we were crude and benighted, and in fact, the vast majority of us remain so, but I, and perhaps certain of my friends, have escaped this brute condition by turning our backs on our origins with contempt, with contempt and derision.*”⁵⁸

Other societies have misrepresented Christianity. In the second, third, and fourth centuries; Christianity waxed more and more popular in the Roman Empire. Eventually, Romans flooded Christian enclaves because it became sociologically and culturally in vogue, depending on who was emperor. Those who had truly followed Christ for the reasons of personal love for God were being numerically overwhelmed by masses of Roman non-Christians who simply wanted to *join up* because everyone was doing it. Christians who had an established history and heritage, one of endured persecution, even martyrdom were now being overrun by clueless thousands claiming Jesus was their new God. Why, because Constantine had made Christianity legal and stylish. He actually never claimed it as his own belief until he was near death when he asked to be baptized. And all that is a story in itself showing how easy it was for people to confuse Christ’s love and make it a twisted human endeavor of dominance by simply using God’s name as justification for violence. Adrian Hastings, former Professor of theology at the University of Leeds writes, “In the wake of Constantine’s original revolution was a vast public

⁵⁸ Robinson, 154

Christianization of society. The numbers poured in. The majority of senior people in power were soon at least nominal Christians.”⁵⁹

This new validation of Christianity brought a tidal wave of people claiming Christianity as their belief into the church. “In the second and third centuries there were debates about how much traditional thought should be taken over by Christians.”⁶⁰ “So too some Christians (nominal) felt that they could participate in traditional cults.”⁶¹ Christian leaders needed a way to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. Over time an organization, structure, and oversights were put into place. Constantine’s personal interest and involvement in some of these proceedings such as the Arian matter, which challenged the deity of Christ; set the stage for an imperial church quite nicely. On a smaller scale, efforts to weed out cultural and nominalists were at least initially successful by creating a three year regimen of study. People coming into Christianity were given a demanding course of study including the Old Testament, the Gospels, and many of the epistles of Paul, Peter, James, and John. Students had to be able to explain God’s plan for humanity both theologically and biblically in the light of these writings. They had to be able to express who Jesus is; and most importantly, who Jesus is to them individually. Many fair-weather, Romanized Christians were unwilling to stay the course in this consuming and rigorous study and dropped out. And that the objective. Baptism and recognition of a person as a “Christian” was granted only after a person successfully went through these studies. Milestones were traversed and ceremonies of conjoinment took on more and more significance over the decades.

⁵⁹ *A World History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 40.

⁶⁰ *Oxford University School of Archaeology Monograph*, vol. 54, *Ancient Rome: the Archaeology of the Eternal City* (Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 2000), 301.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Eventually, these structures, while teaching biblical truths, also began human institutionalizations of Christianity; institutionalisms that would become known as catechism and the sacraments. This process continued to evolve and finally morphed its way into the beginnings of a *universal* (Catholic) church.

The title of “Pope” (papa) was an expression of affection and respect given to many bishops around the Mediterranean. Alexandria, Antioch, and perhaps least of all, Rome.

Peter had been dead over three hundred years before anything recognizable as what is known today as “the Pope” emerged. There is no historical evidence that he was ever known as such in his lifetime. The Catholic motif of Peter being the first pope (taken from Matthew 16) where Jesus said “upon this rock I will build my church” was a theological error on Catholicism's part to underpin their claim on papal authority. Christ was acknowledging Peter’s astute recognition of his rightful claim as Messiah; but Jesus was merely using Peter’s name (Petros: rock) as a wordplay to exclaim that not Peter, but Peter’s remarkable recognition of Jesus as the Messiah would be the rock upon which the church would be built. The keys to the Kingdom of Heaven were not meant for Peter alone but for everyone who could comprehend by faith, the same truth Peter had. Christ never intended to make Peter, Heaven’s doorman.

Even with all this, a Roman’s ability to earn a passing grade in a class or pay dues did not change the internal character of human spirituality. And this problem of people joining Christianity as an institution with little or no spiritual realization of what is meant to belong to Jesus would continue to reassert itself throughout history; not only in Catholicism, but also in Protestant Evangelicalism. Adherents are now “confirmed” after

a course of study. Has that course of study changed them spiritually? Of course not. It might stir a spiritual interest and incite them to seek spirituality that could lead to change; but the study itself does nothing to redeem the fallen human nature.

At the beginning it was just Romans wanting to be culturally trendy; but later it was the religious practitioners of Christianity themselves who sought the aforementioned anthropological sense of community. They wanted that feeling of commonality and cohesion with others like them as they corporately went through all these institutional rites of passage, celebrating ceremonies of belonging. This is an extremely important point as it echos the already drawn distinction between true biblical Christianity and the institution of Christianity. The man-made religious constructs later identified as the Catholic Church, Calvin's theological system and his Geneva theodicy, the Puritans and their political enclaves in the New World, ultimately, segments of American secularism - all follow that same anthropological paradigm of people wanting to belong to something bigger than themselves. (Whether it was right, good, or helpful or not)

As one could not originally be a Christian in the first years of Christianity without first being Jewish, one could not be a Christian without being Catholic before the Protestant Reformation. Catholicism, Luther and later Calvin, all three agree theologically about the need of the individual to be saved from the effect of sin that separates humanity from God; and they all agree on the means by which that salvation occurs: Jesus Christ. Acceptance of his sacrificial death and resurrection are the means to salvation from sin. And at the epicenter of that is the often-heard but rarely understood term Jesus coined in John 3 where once again, the metaphor of birth is used.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know

that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, ‘Are you a teacher of the Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.’⁶²

Catholics see this spiritual second birth as the individual’s connectivity to God via their conjunction with the institution of Catholicism. As Catholicism evolved beyond primitive, first century-Christianity (based only on Christ’s teachings and the directives of his immediate successors, the disciples) the religious formulation of what constituted the “Body of Christ” evolved as well. As Jesus ascended to heaven in the book of Acts, to return spiritually by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, there could now be an embodying of the Spirit of Jesus in humanity itself. For those embracing Rome, this was accomplished through the institution of the Catholic church. And this idea was ultimately at the heart of Luther’s protest. In other words, to be “born again” spiritually one must be part of the body of Christ; to be a part of the body of Christ one must be joined institutionally with the Catholic church because the institution itself is the body of Christ.

⁶² John 3:1-15

For Luther, and subsequently most evangelical Christians today, following Jesus is not realized through joining any human institution, denomination, or religious organization of any kind. It is accomplished by personally choosing (both intellectually and spiritually) to believe and recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the son of God. Further, that Jesus' conquest over death means anyone can be saved from death (separation from God) by faith in that accomplishment. "Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."⁶³ "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."⁶⁴ This personal decision to acknowledge and receive Jesus internally is not just an intellectual choice but rather a compelling relinquishment of self-will in order to take up God's cause of seeing humanity restored to friendship and oneness with its own creator. The directive of Jesus to affirm that realization to the world is behind (not proselytization) but evangelization (announcing good news). This *realization* is spiritually sensed and experienced only through one's personal disavowment of selfish interests in favor of God's; yet, it is never a relinquishment of self-control. This is an internal prompting or *leading*, often affirmed and aided by scriptures in the Bible. It can be outwardly identified: for example, when evangelical Christians make comments such as, "God told me thus and so, or God spoke to my heart and said this or that". These people are not claiming to hear voices; they are trying to externally express that they are sharing a spiritual feeling of commonality with God; one

⁶³ Romans 10:9,10

⁶⁴ Romans 8:11

convincing them that their very mind and human will are synchronizing with God's mind and will in regard to a specific matter, issue, or question they are seeking an answer to. It may be something they are praying about or inquiring from God about.

It must be noted that this sense of inner spiritual connectivity with God is theologically supported in the Bible. Back to the earlier discussion from Genesis that man was created in *the image and likeness of God*.⁶⁵ As the Bible posits the triune nature of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); Humans being created in the image of God, are also triune in the nature (body, soul, and spirit). Trinitarian perspectives of Christian spirituality do not originate with Christianity. The idea of the trinity actually begins in Judaism within the Torah itself. For example, in Genesis "God", or "the LORD" constitutes God's eternal being, mind, will, purpose, and desire. Old Testament prophets speak extensively of a coming Messiah who would be a human embodiment of God; a *Messiah* who would be a human, yet God on earth while the LORD would at the same time remain in heaven. The Messiah would be a tangible one for humans to see, hear, touch, and experience in a finite way, yet with infinite implication. This remarkable feat would be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. The trinity spotlights Jesus as the God/man. One hundred percent God and one hundred percent man. Christ then illuminates the path back to the Father. The Holy Spirit, in distinction to other spirits that are not holy, is the spiritual person of the Godhead that enables, empowers, causes, and creates all these seemingly impossible possibilities. The human spirit lifts up the soul, the mind; it enables a person to defy logic and hope against hope; it perpetuates possibilities when rational thinking collapses and capitulates to what it believes to be

⁶⁵ Genesis 1:26

empirical. It is the creative engine of the human psyche that drives the brain to think, imagine and create. It is the part of humanity that can give it a capacity for good.

Genesis says the “Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters and God said, ‘Let there be light.’⁶⁶ The “greatest commandment of the Torah is “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One”; yet Genesis 1:26 God says, “Let *us* make man...” In Hebrew “Let *us* make” is “*נַעֲשֶׂה*”, transliterated: “*`asah*”. God is one, yet God selfidentifies in the plural. On many occasions in the Old Testament, examples can be seen of theophanies, where God seems to mysteriously take a human form for a moment of time; appearing on earth for some divine purpose.

The New Testament affords the ultimate theophany of those Old Testament proto-appearances first through the virgin birth of Jesus, (also recorded in the Koran); where the Holy Spirit causes Mary to conceive (create) and give birth to the son. A brief side note of import, yet very relevant. Romans 5 explains that because of Adam’s first sin, the sin-nature is passed from Father to child. “As sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men”. This is critical because Mary’s human birthing of Jesus makes Jesus fully human; and thus, qualified to pay for the sins of humanity with one caveat, he must be without sin. But what human has ever been born of man who has never made at least one mistake? None! But Jesus was born of a woman, not of man. She conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and thus, did not inherit the nature to sin, hurt, or do wrong against God or man. So this made him fully divine. This is why he is the God-man. One hundred percent human. One hundred percent divine. This is how Jesus could live a sinless human life in the face of all temptation and

⁶⁶ Genesis 1:2,3

rightfully give himself a sacrifice for humanity. Calvin, Luther, and the Pope are all in perfect harmony in this matter; for any tradition that rejects this truth, condemns itself to the hell it hopes to avoid. The virgin birth narrative gives us the inner-workings of the triune God. More notable still, is the event of Jesus' baptism at the Jordan river by John the Baptist at the onset of his ministry. Jesus uses the term "Father" in description of God's mind, heart, and will in heaven. He calls himself "the Son of man" asserting a simultaneously human embodiment of the Father on earth. The baptism event shows Jesus as a human being in the water. The Father is speaking from heaven, (the gospels says his voice was like thunder and heard by dozens of witnesses who have given testimony of the same) telling what the voice said, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." The narrative further speaks of the Holy Spirit as having taken the form of a dove; fluttering over Jesus in the same way as the Hebrew says the "Spirit of God" "moved" or "brooded" over the surface of the deep; making God's first spoken word, "Light" a reality in the universe. John identifies Jesus as "the light of man"⁶⁷ bringing spiritual light into a violent, dark, and chaotic world. Thus, one God in three personalities. The Biblical account here is not to portray God as schizophrenic, which is medically defined as multiple personalities that are unaware of each other; but rather, the trinity denotes just the opposite, an interrelated trinity of three persons in one. God's mind, human embodiment, and spirit - three in one; working, being, acting with absolute unity of purpose. And the human being created in God's image comprising first, the human soul: biblically described as the human seat of intellectual thought (the mind, the brain). The soul comprehends the universe in a context of how everything self-relates. The soul, the "me" part of a person; it constantly "wants" or expresses "need", asking

⁶⁷ John 1:4

“how does this help me, or enable me to be in a better place; or how can a given situation be better for myself, at least as I perceive better?” It is the human soul that needs “saving” theologically. The “fall” of humankind as a result of man’s selfish choice of disobedience to God’s directive in Eden was based on a human self-rationalization of “better”. This choice severed the natural connection between humanity and God, leaving it to autonomously continue in existence, but to do so in a separated state (sin) from God’s presence. This means the “soul” of the human being only regards matters relating to its *perceived* well-being or desire, versus the wellbeing of others or the betterment of the whole as a greater good.

The human body made of mud containing a few pounds of chemical elements, is physically controlled by the brain which is stimulated by electricity via a chemical process; yet without a connectivity with its creator. The body and it’s chemistry of hormonal and genetic responses to outward stimuli give the perceptions to the soul to process as good, bad, or indifferent and drives a human being forward accordingly; but without God’s involvement; as a sailboat without a rudder; the human being is blown about by winds of its own passions, lust, greed, and selfishness. The desires of the soul change like the wind, so human lives blow this way one day and another the next day.

But what is beautifully and remarkably distinctive about humanity from animal life is the human spirit; The spirit is the component of a human being that crowns it with divinity.

To use contemporary cultural semantics, the human spirit is tantamount to a router that makes a wifi connection possible. The human spirit, like the soul, is medically unidentifiable, yet undeniable. It is what makes communication and connectivity with

God possible. According to the Old Testament, at death in contrast to the soul, the spirit of the person, good or bad returns to God. (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

Calvin does not disagree with all this at all; but is influenced by the writing of an early church Father named Irenaeus. Irenaeus wrote that while Jesus was on earth, his divine nature was more subdued but his human nature, though untarnished by sin, took a forefront position. But for Calvin, “what Irenaeus had applied to Jesus’ human body, Calvin extends further to Jesus’ human soul. The human emotions, the ignorance, the growth were not God pretending to be human but to show the reality of Christ’s humanity.”⁶⁸ While in a general sense, any theologian might agree; what underlies Calvin’s view is the focality of God’s sovereignty manifesting itself so as to override anyone that might question the authority of his theocracy . Evangelical Christians would concur that indeed God is both sovereign, and at the end of the day, no one can question God because they are incapable of even asking the right questions; let alone understanding a divine answer. But the argument, however, can be made that God affords humanity certain understandings of his divine sovereignty at times. Understanding Calvin’s position a little better can be derived from his commentary on Matthew 8:23.

And when he had entered into a ship Mark says that *other little ships* crossed *along with him*: but that Christ entered into his own ship *with his disciples* Luke too quotes his words: Matthew is more concise. They agree, however, as to the leading fact, that Christ laid himself down to rest, and that, while he was asleep, a tempest suddenly arose. First, it is certain that the storm which agitated the lake was not accidental: for how would God have permitted his Son to be driven about at random by the violence of the waves? But on this occasion he intended to make known to the apostles how weak and inconsiderable their faith still was. Though

⁶⁸ McKim, 158

Christ's sleep was natural, yet it served the additional purpose of making the disciples better acquainted with their weakness.⁶⁹

While this may be so, the focus is on God being strong and man being weak. The statement is correct but there is a hidden layer of intent here. Calvin, the lawyer is contextually building a case. Not so much to signify the significance of Jesus' humanity, though it does do that; but to contextually reinforce the idea that humans are limited in their scope of understanding. Also true, but Calvin is continually depositing the notion that in Christ's physical absence there are individuals who fill this gap between God and man; and that the weak are to trust them as one might trust Christ. If God is sovereign, then God by his power has raised up certain leaders to lead. Humans are weak and incapable of understanding everything. Therefore, they must accept God's sovereignty over everything as it is expressed through these people he has raised up in leadership to help them.

Returning to the thought of Catholicism's view of connectivity with God; one might hear representatives of the Vatican for example, talk about the "Church's" position on something. As though a "ruling" by the Pope or a Vatican council was all-authoritative; and for them it is. The individual is "born again" by being a part of the collective institution that they believe Christ commissioned. Whereas biblical Christianity, while not negating human organization, is an expression of a divine organism versus a human organization. There are people in the Roman Catholic Church who are part of that institution; yet have also truly experienced a personal revelation of Jesus and their outward behavior reflects that change accordingly. There are Catholics

⁶⁹ Calvin, John. *"Commentary on Matthew 8:23". "Calvin's Commentary on the Bible".* <https://www.studydrive.net/commentaries/cal/matthew-8.html>. 1840-57.

who reflect Christ and there are others who, like many Romans in the third century who just joined Catholicism because of its cultural importance. And if this isn't confusing enough, Calvin believed that as God is sovereign and humanity weak, the disciples didn't know what to do in the storm. But just as Jesus was there to help them; Jesus is sent to help weak Christians now. He has done so by elevating representatives to lead.

Therefore, all should obey without question because we are too weak and ignorant to question. And no one wants to be found resisting God. Catholicism was making the institution God's representative; Calvin was making himself and his successors the oracles of God. Mainstream evangelicalism, while believing that God can use institutions and specific individuals to speak to humanity, holds the position that each individual can hear God's voice for themselves if they can recognize it. It believes that the Holy Spirit can help each person in that person's context make good decisions and choices. With all this in mind it is no wonder that American culture is so confused about what Christianity is. One easily recognizable example of this confusion can be seen in Al Pacino's character in *The Godfather*, (1970) where the newly anointed crime boss finds himself attending the sacramental baptism of his child; and at that very moment the camera cuts to images of his henchmen violently murdering his mobster competitors.

This distinction laid aside, and returning to the Greek perception of atheism in Christianity briefly, not seeing an embodiment of the deity by the human eye is not dissimilar from science's assertion that only that which is quantifiable viably exists. Subsequently, science and academia may be said to *deify* themselves in a sense, and if the word "venerate" posits an image too extreme, perhaps "celebrates" what it considers to be academic or scientific accomplishments.

This intellectual veneration/celebration is rarely contemplated as such; but nonetheless, it follows the same old path of religious intellectual recognition. This scientific religiosity is comprehended through the in-depth studies made in academia, scientific research, experimentation, observation, presentations, and the awarded accolades of colleagues heaped upon their most accomplished peers. All of this, the language, the recognition, the awards, is just another expression of religious liturgy. Like the ancient Greeks, academia and science in the twenty-first century are filled with gods and demigods. There are levels of appreciation in science and scholarship just as there are levels of respect given to deities in religions traditions. The point of this point is this: religious activity is a physical and visible response to what is understood by the mind, whether this understanding is derived from reading what was written or hearing what was spoken. Some thoughts, and subsequently some actions are great, some are small, some are major, some minor. But it is through the medium of language, expressed through specific semantics and terminology, that ideas come to have meaning, significance, or are given importance. All of this is determined by the brain. And based on comprehended language between one and person and another; or one group and another; there are corresponding expected, even anticipated, behaviors and conduct on the part of both celebrant and celebratee. Specific constructs of language are an outward manifestation of inner thought. Distinctions of reason from thoughts become the flashpoints of conjunction between human reason and deistic belief.

Academia, science, and scholarship in general, are in many ways religiously institutionalized just as the Catholic church was in Roman days. “Someone can only be *saved* by going with us”, so to speak. In academia, *salvation* (acceptance of scholarship

and/or science's claims that have been standardized as *beliefs* whatever those beliefs are) must find coalescence anthropologically (spiritually) with the perspective of the individual in the way one had to embrace the Catholic Church's dogma to gain heaven. Luther was excommunicated for questioning Papal authority; and if one bucks the academic or scientific sociological paradigm, one might be *excommunicated*; to be cast out of the settlement to whither beyond the "walls" of the academic, scholarly, or scientific community. This attitude in academia is very religious; and very similar to those who chose to institutionalize ways of thinking, and subsequently ways of behaving in Calvin's Geneva theocracy as well.

Again, it is important to see and acknowledge that this motif of *religious give and take* has always been around; Calvin did not originate it, nor did his followers. And that is not what is posited here. What is being touted as a first, is the scale and scope of this occasional and seemingly happenstance twisting of Calvin's theology as a sociological justification for behaviors that are not consistent with Christ's teachings. This theological justification (twisted or not) did not have nearly this potency in history past.

This *religious behavior* of secularistic America restricting any ideas (whatever the discipline) with its own religiously expressed sanction of others who resist those who know best, as everyone else is too weak or ignorant to comprehend their reasoning and should therefore, just accept what academia and science say without question; is hauntingly similar to the Calvinistic argument, "I'm in charge because God is sovereign and all knowing and all powerful; and if God didn't want me in charge I would not be here; therefore, if one resists me, they are an enemy of God."

Calvin's theological systemization of a sort of "divine right" can find resonance in scripture but with Calvin, such leaders were not just saying, "God put me in charge." They were biblically justified in demonstrating the way God put them in charge in a very tangible and often mean-spirited, if not violent way.

For example, *some* of the Puritans, when their religious micro-cultures perceived a threat; excised people from early American settlements to the wilderness; or worse, putting them in stocks, branded them, or in the case of Salem, literally burned them at the stake for any expressed attitude that seemed to be questioning the authority of those who had attained significance and prominence within those micro-cultures.

When Calvin's theocracy *jumped the pond* in 1630 in several ships; they brought over a thousand Puritans to settle what would become the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

John Winthrop (right) the elected governor of the colony, set up shop, so to speak, under the banner of his "City Upon a Hill" speech. This speech, taken from Jesus' comments on the Sermon on the Mount, that a true Christian life should be like a city on a hill and can't be hidden. As a beacon of hope, it was to spiritually serve as welcoming



willingness to help the unsaved. An adapted sociological theme used by both John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan of this speech would echo into the twentieth century in famous speeches that they gave. Winthrop likened the colony (Boston) to a community

of Christians living thusly, as beacons on a hill. His exact words taken from both Jesus and Moses,

When hee shall make us a prayse and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantacions: the lord make it like that of New England: for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us; so that if wee shall deale falsely with our god in this worke wee have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a byword through the world, wee shall open the mouthes of enemies to speake evill of the wayes of god and all professours for Gods sake; wee shall shame the faces of many of gods worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into Curses upon us till wee be consumed out of the good land whether wee are going: And to shutt upp this discourse with that exhortacion of Moses that faithfull servant of the Lord in his last farewell to Israell Deut. 30.⁷⁰

The idea of America having a *manifest destiny* finds its origins in this very paragraph. In recent years, academia and scholarship have sought to discredit Winthrop's posit; to expose as fallacious and arrogant, the idea that America had a *manifest destiny* established by God. But what is the true objective being sought here? Is it to rewrite history and right an injustice or is it to dethrone America from its place of prominence really a spiritual desire to dethrone God so that "they" can take his place? Is the idea of a divinely created *manifest destiny* for the United State really such a problem historically? True enough, America has used this thinking to unjustly assert dominance; first over Native Americans, then later, to flex its muscles all over the world. There is little question that American sociological expressivity has assumed an anthropological posture of superiority and rulership based on this Winthropic-Calvinistic assertion of divine right. And there is historical evidence to suggest that the Puritan settlers felt themselves spiritually and morally elevated because of their Christian faith; but not necessarily superior. But the idea of a growing number within the ranks of the elect was still possible

⁷⁰ Michael Parker, *John Winthrop: Founding the City Upon a Hill*, Routledge Historical Americans (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 42.

because of the Calvinistic focality of God's sovereignty. Again, how does foolish humanity know who is yet to be saved and added to the elect?

The presumptuous arrogance that God loves America more than everyone else is an example of a twisted Calvinism. This presumption is what is despised by so many in the world. And secularism's left leaning adherents pushback in the fear of being accused of guilt by association with these self-righteousness people. Liberalism's constant fear of being called unjust is at the heart of progressive theology's incessant insecurity of being marginalized sociologically. It counters with the notion that America does not think itself better or stronger; that America is just one of many countries. But is that historically correct? Is it just like every other country? When in the six millennia of recorded history in Western Civilization had anything been attempted that could be compared with what was done at the constitutional convention in Philadelphia? A Philadelphia woman asked Benjamin Franklin, "What kind of government are you giving us sir?" His response was, "A republic madam; if you can handle it." But there was no republic in Greece or Rome like this one. A republic with a separation of powers, individual rights and freedoms, and internal checks and balances? History shows that America is not just another nation. Something very different has taken place in this amalgamation of British colonies that were themselves individual states. While the United States and the people of the United States are certainly not loved more by God than any other nation or people; and while America is not better than the rest of the world; it does uniquely embody the rest of the world. Its treasure of having representation of every ethnic people group on planet earth, even today is not replicated by any other nation. And they are living together in relative peace as compared to many places in the earth where just a few ethnicities vying for

control have left a wake of genocide and destruction that number in the millions of casualties. For the first time in history; a republic is created that is truly representative of the anthropological union for which it stands. For the first time, people from every people group, every religious tradition, every race, every language, could be together. They are free to celebrate both their diversity and sameness at the same time. When has this ever happened in Western Civilization? Answer: The historian must answer: It has never happened. And if one believes in God, then the idea of *manifest destiny* might indeed have a basis of viability in these historical facts. Yet a divinely appointed destiny would not be one of dominance over the weak but of assuming responsibility to care for them. It would be to help the less fortunate not capitalize on their misfortune. It would be a manifest destiny affording resources that other nations don't possess, to demonstrate kindness to the ostracized and marginalized; to strengthen the cause for the freedom and liberty of the one to self-determine. All the while providing a societal harmony with which that individual can coexist with the many who may make different choices. A divine manifest destiny would aid those who have been oppressed and forced to accept imposition of a tyrannical regimes so that they could express their own ideas without fear of retribution. A manifest destiny would be one of leading by example. And here are the real and conflicted ideas of America's *manifest destiny* that continue to compete, both in American society and as America is viewed around the world. For *manifest destiny*, like Calvinism in general, some things are consistent with scripture and some things that have been perverted into something else. But in so many ways and so many times over the last two centuries all these noble and idealistic goals have been realities alongside the oppressions, discriminations, and persecutions afflicted by America.

The top layer of Winthrop's assertion in his "City on the Hill" speech can be seen to be in keeping with Jesus' words in the New Testament. But the perversion of some of Calvin's ideas about predestination meant that consequently, only some of the people were part of the elect (and would be saved). The others simply were going to hell no matter what they did; yet from a Calvinistic perspective, they still served a purpose for the elect. In the early years of Boston, men such as John Cotton (a follower and supporter of Winthrop) would help evaluate and judge individuals based on their outward behavior and their business success. Cotton and his appointed committees were granted the authority by the governor to determine who was part of the elect. Those who did make muster formed satellite communities such as Marblehead.

These communities served to promote commerce with the elect (church members) and thus, make them become more prosperous. These non-elect (lost) were tolerated and permitted existence alongside the elect as long as there was no challenge to the authorities.

It was a different matter when an educated woman from within the ranks of the church stood up and began to point out inconsistencies and activities that were not in



harmony with Jesus' teachings. One woman did so in America to Winthrop just as Luther had pointed out to the Pope in Europe: that humanity is saved by grace and that everyone can hear God's voice in their heart and spirit if they would learn to listen.

Of course, this kind of thinking meant that people might pray and listen to God speak through the Bible for

themselves; and thus, the few at the top might have their position threatened.

Anne Hutchinson, was just such a person. It is important to refrain from casting Winthrop and his fellow Calvinists into a trope of the dictatorial cult leaders. Nor should Calvin be either. Historical evidence can be shown that Winthrop and Calvin before him, could be kind, gentle, patient, and Christlike. It is only in certain situations that certain triggers are tripped and spark a less than Christian response. This is important to note in secularists today who can also be kind, magnanimous, and seemingly, objective. It is only when sociological triggers are tripped by the unsuspecting, that they find themselves the victims of a *witch hunt*.

Calvin and his descendants were never purposefully exclusive. Calvinists, such as Winthrop, may have judged others as the elect or the non-elect; but as they saw themselves as elevated to hear God's voice; they also were cognizant that they did not know God's mind. And that made possible a hope that anyone not currently in the elect might yet find conversion. If God was sovereign, how did they know that God didn't intend for someone lost to join the ranks of the elect in the future. And it was just this posit of faith and hope that propelled the Calvinistic Puritans to create an institution of higher learning. There was actually a colony-wide referendum, that gave every colonist a vote. And by virtue of this democratic action in a theocratic society, the Great and General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony voted to take public money (taxes) and use them to create the first college in America. Its primary function was to train Christian ministers and leaders in the Bible and to promote literacy amidst the illiterate colonists and native Americans. The idea was to see that everyone could read so that they could read the Bible. It was thought that if everyone read the scriptures for themselves; that

even the most ignorant would be bright enough to see the need to accept Jesus; and in doing so, would be thusly changed spiritually. These one-at-a time voluntary conversions would consequently affect the whole with positive spiritual change to impact every layer of society with good. This significant democratic action resulted in the formation of what today is known as Harvard University.

As a side note, most of the institutions of higher learning that would come into being during the colonial period would have that same overarching purpose behind their formation. This includes all but one of the other eight Ivy league schools - Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Princeton, and Yale. Even into the nineteenth century that same Christian focus was paramount in the formation of schools such as Geneva College, Roberts Wesleyan, and Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. The twentieth century continued this process with Pepperdine University in 1937. The point being, the Christian value of education originating in Calvinism in America was a kindness offered to all, whether they were part of the elect or not, in the hope that all might turn out to be predestined to be the elect after all. So in effect Calvin's system, twisted and perverted by so many along the way; has the potential for ending exactly where Luther started. That even though a man is not in the elect, no one knows whether one might someday be or not; so hope for the best and work toward their salvation. Sadly, the kindness and inclusive attitudes frequently ended when the few recognized authorities at the top, had their positions threatened or questioned. Calvin's brilliant legal theology could be applied to protect the hierarchy of the *enterprise*. Anne Hutchinson had her own personal relationship with Jesus, she could read, had a copy of the Bible, and knew how to use it. She called out Winthrop on the actions and attitudes of his government that were unbiblical and unChristian.

She made her case with the Bible and exposed their inconsistencies. While she was admired by many, she was in the end, turned out of the colony to die in the wilderness for her forthrightness. She, her family, and a few followers moved to Rhode Island; but a few years later were butchered mercilessly by the Algonquins. When word of the massacre got back to Winthrop he publicly commented that God had clearly vindicated his actions by showing Anne Hutchinson was a heretic.

These judgemental and confused Calvinisms can still be seen in academia, both in Europe and the United States. It can be viewed through actions taken against scholars who might question the validity of accepted academic and scientific paradigms. It is not uncommon today for punitive measures to be taken against scientists who present evidence that goes against the grain. Archaeologists that present artifacts that don't jive with the current storyline of science and scholarship are strangely absent from the list of notable presenters at conferences. Scholarly journals simply turn down the scholars who want to publish papers that buck the system. Other measures might include keeping an otherwise qualified professor from being granted tenure if they are perceived as undermining the culture (peace) of academia. There might be a sudden loss or forced relinquishment of an academic chair in a department of a respected university for one who seems to stir the pot, so to speak. All of these are potential sanctions that are religiously imposed via an institutionalized mechanism. It was this religious mechanism that was working in Calvin's Geneva theocracy in Switzerland, and later in Winthrop's Boston Colony. Again, it is not because one is right and one is wrong that this happens; it is because a question might threaten to disturb the peace of the academic status quo.

Today, things have not changed much in academia. What is said or spoken determines whether one is promoted to chair a department or cast out to subsist as a lowly adjunct.

A notable example of how this manifests today is found in scholarly treatment of the Big Bang Theory. Any truthful and honest astrophysicist must concede, laying aside deistic belief, that the big bang is the least likely of a dozen or more theories to be viable. R. Gray and J. Dunning-Davies of the Astrophysics Department at the University of Hull, England represents an effort to highlight the strange discrepancies between science's posited desire to find truth and how things actually play out in the discussion about the Big Bang theory.

In their article, "A Review of Redshift and its interpretation in Cosmology and Astrophysics" they point out that,

Galileo Galilei once said: in questions of science, the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual. It seems taken for granted that the Big Bang theory best explains cosmological observations and the origins of the universe. The average layman often readily accepts the theory because it's the only one he knows; children are taught about the Big Bang theory at a young age, with little or no mention of the existence of alternatives. People also have a tendency to follow popular trends; therefore, it is easy for the non-physicist to fall into the trap of blindly accepting the Big Bang theory without question. After all, if so many highly intelligent, well-known scientists believe in the theory, then surely it must be correct? The aforementioned quote from Galileo gives an important message; simply because it's a popular theory that most physicists believe, that doesn't make it the correct theory. It still has its faults, and is not necessarily any more truthful than any of the other theories available today. But, it does seem to receive an unfair amount of acclaim for just a theory, being afforded such luxuries as being able to simply alter the theory conveniently whenever a question is raised against it, or invoking hypothetical "dark energy" ideas to explain away discrepancies with the theory; such luxuries are not so readily afforded to alternatives.⁷¹

⁷¹ R. Gray J. Dunning-Davies, "A review of redshift and its interpretation in cosmology and astrophysics," *eprint arXiv:0806.4085* (06/2008): 7-8, accessed October 30, 2017, https://www.eksendia.com/tm/school_journal_online.aspx.

Until recently, it has been a rare that the big bang is challenged in academia because it disturbs the peace of science's ignorance. They have spent the last three quarters of a century propagating it. And one does not want to lose their place in the community and be turned out to wither; facing the savages of the wilderness away from the settlement.

Expressed ideas, beliefs, and alternative theory that might upset the status quo of academia or science draws fire in a religious way. The Big Bang found resonance with the academic community because it seemed to coalesce well with Darwinism, and until the idea of the Big Bang, science struggled to explain where the universe originated. The Big Bang gave them a creation without a Creator, or at least, so they seemed to believe. The origins of the theory itself have connectivity with Einstein but also many others. And ironically, the individual actually credited with the Big Bang theory is surprisingly, a Roman Catholic Priest. George Lemaître, a Belgian who would eventually study at Cambridge, Harvard, and earn a Phd from MIT is the man who put the *Bang* into the Big Bang. But what is not generally understood is that both he and Einstein were never trying to prove God out of the picture. They were just searching for how, as they both continued to use the theological term "creation", the universe got here. Lemaître's perspective was as follows,

We may speak of this event as of a beginning. I do not say a creation. Physically it is a beginning in the sense that if something happened before, it has no observable influence on the behavior of our universe, as any feature of matter before this beginning has been completely lost by the extreme contraction at the theoretical zero. Any preexistence of the universe has a metaphysical character...The question if it was really a beginning or rather a creation, something started from nothing, is a

philosophical question which cannot be settled by physical or astronomical considerations.⁷²

Pope Pius XII actually asserted that Lemaître had found a way for Christianity and Science to go forward together and posited that the theory did not prove atheism but actually affirmed and validated God's existence. The vexing thing for non-theists is that the Big Bang simply can't address the origins of matter compressed in the Big Bang, nor does it address well what made this gravitational compression. This is all in the same stew of raw meat in Einstein's pot of uncooked physics that never quite got cooked to his satisfaction. Yet, proponents have been running with the Big Bang for seventy-five plus years, bowling over any person with any other idea that got in the way (and there have been quite a few). But despite the threat of academia's twisted Calvinistic punitivism, challenges to the Big Bang keep seeping through the cracks. Challenges that seem to have a ringing of truth telling.

In 2015 Ahmed Farag Ali and Saurya Das of the Center for Fundamental Physics, Zewail City of Science and Technology, Giza, Egypt; along with the Dept. of Physics, Faculty of Sciences, Benha University, Benha, Egypt; and the Department of Physics and Astronomy, at the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada - published their own article (a telling fact in itself) entitled *Cosmology from Quantum Potential*. This short little paper has been minimized and marginalized by the academic world, yet the math in the article has so far, been proven irrefutable by the greatest mathematicians on earth. Although the current primary tactic seems to follow the old, *ignore it and hope it will go away* manner of handling something undesirable. The media has clearly aided academia in that strategy as at this writing, only Fox News has acknowledged its

⁷² Hubert Vecchierello, *Einstein and Relativity; Lemaître and the Expanding Universe* (Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1934), 23

importance. But little by little, it is gaining traction and momentum. Its short few pages of elegant equation and explication are summarized as follows:

We have shown here that as for the QRE, the second order Friedmann equation derived from the QRE also contains two quantum correction terms. These terms are generic and unavoidable and follow naturally in a quantum mechanical description of our universe. Of these, the first can be interpreted as cosmological constant or dark energy of the correct (observed) magnitude and a small mass of the graviton (and axion). The second quantum correction term pushes back the time singularity indefinitely, and predicts an everlasting universe.⁷³

What does it all mean? Einstein always had a problem with part of his theory; The math just didn't seem to work out right. It had nothing to do with theism at all. It was the equations themselves. Einstein's theory necessarily, even consequently leads to the universe beginning in the Big Bang. But that was the part that didn't add up...literally. For years, colleagues and scholarly supporters helped him hone the problems, but it never really resolved; and in the end, the problems were simply minimized by the facets of the theory that worked. In layman's terms, the "Big" problem with the "Big Bang" is the theory of relativity was relativity itself. *Relativity* should have simply led to and proved the Big Bang; it seemed instead to keep proving something more, or perhaps something else. That the universe or something originating it, didn't begin at all, in the sense of time. It was eternal. That is not what academia wanted to hear then and it is not what it wants to hear now. At the date of this writing, the Big Bang is still touted in university and documentary; even as it bleeds out on on the marble floors of higher education. Eventually, it is likely to topple over and gasp it's last breath in the growing body of evidence coming to light and depleting it's *enterprise* of having rational viability.

⁷³ Ahmed Farag Ali and Saurya Das, "Cosmology from quantum potential," *Physics Letter B published by Elsevier*(January, 2015): 276-79.

But back to Calvinisms in science, it is the trope of language, whether spoken or written that exhibits a construct of both thought and spirituality. And if outward behavior is forced or compelled by legality, or even via a social pressure, then it is not really emanating from an internal motive of truth-telling but rather from a fear of legal punishment for non-compliance. It is artificial at best. And while Calvin may have had the morally correct layer on the top; he also had the layer of “do what you are told because I know best” underneath. Of course, “best” is the perpetuation of Dawkins *enterprise*, those who are declaring what is science and what is not. But who are “they” really? Who are these progenitors of truth-telling in scholarship? And whoever “they” are why can’t “they” come out and expose themselves from the protection of the academic shadows? Perhaps that is another mystery of the universe. But regardless, Jesus said, “the good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”⁷⁴ And as woman like Anne Hutchinson and men like Martin Luther King Jr. rise and fall, live and die on words followed up by deeds affirming their words; what then, is in the heart of science and academia in the twenty-first century that causes “them” to speak as they do? And to demonstrate their spoken thoughts by actions; actions that don’t always have anything to do with science, history, and truth or justice; sometimes it’s just keeping the old academic express train chugging down the track. It must be the impact of the words. It can’t just be the brain creating the thoughts. The hardware is not worth anything without the software.

⁷⁴ Luke 6:45

Is there Justification for Viewing the Bible Differently than other Religious Texts?

Dawn's early light is only now beginning to break on the twenty-first century's third decade, yet in last night's departing cultural wake; the dispelled darkness is giving way to an early illumination of new thinking. It was left on the front stoop of Western civilization whilst society slumbered through a transition of perspective. One would swear it was not sitting there yesterday. A brave new day awakens, leaving for the collective culture, something very different.

It is a new and very unique way to consider a very old and common question, Millennials (the segment of the population coming of age around the year 2000) seem to reflect on the question of the Bible's significance more than they want to let on. Whether the Bible is important occasionally surfaces in their discussions in university seminars and academic gatherings, on social media, and blogs. No, the subject is not a topic every day, just every now and then. And yet when it arises, it does so with great passion. Almost as an unexpected volcanic eruption.

Where did the Bible come from? Is it divine? Does the Bible have value today in a secular society? Just how accurate is the scripture historically? What about biblical ethics and morality? How can they be compatible with our culture of relativism? Has there ever been any evidence that the Bible has any real metaphysical significance? Or is it just another religious text? Discussions and comments vary, but a summary of them usually they sounds something like this; "The Bible may have some good moral and ethical teachings, but overall it is no different than any other religious text. It is just one of many writings that come from one of many religious traditions. It's no different or

unique in any way.” Or, “The Bible is a human contrived, imperfect, and often conflicting book of metaphor and symbolism. It was written by uneducated and often, superstitious people. It is sometimes racist, homophobic, violent, self-righteous, and condescending; and has no basis in history, or science. And since it is often offensive and judgemental, it should not really be taken too seriously.”

Ironically, American society seems to take great pains to make certain everyone knows they live by the old adage “Judge not that you be not judged.” It’s ironic because these are the words of Jesus, coming straight out of the Bible. Whether they realize they’re quoting Jesus or not; the idea of good giving rise to good or bad resulting in bad in terms of human action is a metaphysical one. Important to note here is that a hallmark of societal ethics comes straight out of a text often claimed to have little significance.

Discussions about “judging” permeate American culture. Once again, language and specific words betray an internal intellectual process. One can hear odd sounding extrapolations of the word “judge” that have crept into contemporary English. They do not even conform to proper English grammar, yet have become part of everyday vernacular.

For example, words such as “judgey”. “You’re being very judgey!” Or, “Christianity is very judgemental.” Meaning, whatever is being asserted in the Bible is unfair. It is negative and makes those who live differently, feel like they are wrong to express their distinctive opinions.

What is going on here from an anthropological perspective? Today’s society is making a blanket declaration that whatever the Bible says, whether it can be empirically determined to be true or not, is to be labeled as unjust because it might be

hurtful to someone somewhere. And making someone, anywhere, feel bad about themselves makes “us” (the collective society) feel bad about ourselves.

To get this in perspective, consider the recent article in the November edition of *Marketing News* which cited a study on the neurological impacts of using social media.

Mauricio Delgado, associate professor of psychology at Rutgers University in Newark, N.J., says that marketers’ online efforts can have the same neurological effect on consumers as offline staples of living. “The same brain areas [that are activated for food and water] are activated for social stimuli,” he says. “This can be a smile, someone telling you you’re doing a great job or you’re trustworthy, or you’re a nice person, or even merely cooperating with somebody. All of these social ‘reinforcers’ are abstract but show similar activity in the reward centers of the brain. This suggests that, perhaps, if you’re getting positive feedback in social media—‘likes’ and shares and retweets—it’s a positive ‘reinforcer’ of using social media, and one that allows you to get the positive effects and return to it seeking out more social reinforcement.”⁷⁵

The medical and sociological impact of social media is still another interesting subject to be bypassed. The discussion here is whether secularism is marginalizing the significance of the Bible in society and further, whether it is simultaneously adversely impacting the traditional family unit? Is America so hungry for positive reinforcement that they are neurologically addicted to social media and their phones which delivers it to them like digital junkies in need of a fix? And it often seems that *some* segments of secularism screams with a wagging finger pointing, or an angry protest with a fiery speech: that the Bible is being judgemental. “The Bible tells me I’m wrong! Its saying I am sinning! How dare those Christians? If this is what it says in the Bible, it has to be wrong! It makes me feel bad about myself. And anything that makes one feel bad must not be good. This is simplistic generalization; but nonetheless, reasonably on point, at least according to a recent *Huffington Post* article from 2016 that is entitled,

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Molly Soto, “Feeding the Addiction,” *Marketing News*, November 2015, 20-21.

Does Religion Make us Bad People. The article cites a survey of 750 young adults on their perceptions of Christians. “Given a wide range of adjectives to choose from, both religious insiders and outsiders overwhelmingly picked two words first and foremost to describe Christians. The two words indicated were, “Judgmental” (78 percent) and “Hypocritical” (72 percent).”⁷⁶

Those who have different views about right and wrong from the Bible perceive that distinction as someone or something passing judgement on them. And Christians who support a biblical worldview are often seen as “forcing” Biblical values on everyone else; and thus, Christianity is almost always hurting someone’s feelings.

Frequent expressions of such might be summarized in the following: “This kind of judgmentalism is offensive. It is not *who we are* as Americans! And so those who stubbornly cling to the literal teachings of the Bible should be made to understand that *we are not going to tolerate such intolerance!*” So to different degrees, those who assert their faith in the divinity of the Bible are not taken seriously at the least; and in some cases, it might be argued that Christians are being ostracized and labeled as offenders of the community. At this writing no one is being banned from society and sent to devil’s island to die for Christ; but in some very poignant ways there are attempts at discrediting those who believe in the divine origin of the Bible.

In order to judge another to be judgmental one must themselves, “judge” and become “judgemental”. If a “judgement” is not made, then one cannot assess whether someone else is being judgmental or not.

Jesus’ specific words about all this are found in Matthew's Gospel, 7:1–5

⁷⁶ Piatt, Chris. "Does Religion Make Us Worse People?" *HuffPost*, November 17, 2016. Accessed December 05, 2017. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/christian-piatt/does-religion-make-us-wor_b_8584760.html.

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Asserting Christianity as being “judgemental” is a prime illustration of how secularism at times can have a very Puritanical and Calvinistic feel to it. It is clothed in non-religiosity and appears very removed from religion and spirituality but it is, on occasion, religiously asserted against the Bible and Christianity; sanitized of Christian and deistic semantic, yet attacking, in a very determined Puritan way, all that affirms Christianity, I.E. (the religious right, the culturally Christian or the afore-discussed genuine article: those spiritually and internally who believe themselves to be spiritually transformed). And further, in the “judgemental” case in point, the attack is framed by quoting scripture against the scriptures. Those holding to this secular conceptualism are using the Bible as their weapon of choice against those who believe in the divine origins of the Bible. (A tactic used by the the devil in the temptation of Christ in Matthew 4.)

How is this a twisted religious Calvinism rebranded as pluralistic and secular? Has not this kind of thing always happened in human communities? Of course it has! Once again, this is not to say such societal marginalizations are the first such in history. Human behavior has degraded quite successfully since the fall on its own; and all without Calvin's help. What is different in the case of secularism in the United States is: many American secularists, without even realizing it, have taken Calvin's legal way of thinking and have created a sociological justification for impacting, changing, and in some cases,

discriminating in American society. And they have done so in ways that have historically never had such justification in the past.

Dr. Alex McFarland of North Greenville University, wrote an article for Fox News entitled “Ten Reasons Millennials are backing away from God and Christianity” showing results of recent research involving *dozens of interview with teens, twenty-somethings, self professed ex-Christians, and religion and culture experts*. The research not only queried what they believed and why, but how they have chosen to respond to Christianity based on their opinions. Christianity is considered by 60% of these as “judgemental”. One of the significant reasons for this is directly due to the influence of

militant secularism: embraced by media and enforced in schools, secular education approaches learning through the lens of ‘methodological naturalism’. It is presupposed that all faith claims are merely expressions of subjective preference. The only ‘true’ truths are claims that are divorced from any supernatural context and impose no moral obligations on human behavior. People today are subjected to enforced secularism.⁷⁷

McFarland’s research turned up another relevant mitigating factor that “tolerance today essentially means, ‘Because my truth is, well, my truth, no one may ever question any behavior or belief I hold.’ This ‘standard’ has become so ingrained that it is not possible to rationally critique any belief or behavior without a backlash of criticism.”⁷⁸

There are places where Christians are being martyred for simply identifying as Christians, such as in Iran. But as of this writing in Europe and America there are not really persecutions but rather lightly troubled discriminations in comparison; and then only on occasion. In ancient Rome it was similar; not every Roman Emperor sent Christians to the lions in the arena, though such events historically did happen.

⁷⁷ Alex McFarland, “Ten reasons millennials are backing away from God and Christianity,” *Fox News*, April 30, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/04/30/ten-reasons-millennials-are-backing-away-from-god-and-christianity.html> (accessed December 5, 2017).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

But much of the first three hundred years of Christianity involved a lighter troubling of Christianity. Christians were ostracized, fined, restricted, and shamed for their Christian beliefs because those Biblically based beliefs undermined the Roman culture and society which had been built upon the pantheon of Roman deities. Roman holidays, the construction industry that built, repaired, and maintained Roman temples, shrines, and monuments; workman and craftsman who made statuary and related religious accoutrements for the worship of these many deities; and restaurant and hotel (inn) business, dependent on visiting pilgrims were all impacted economically by Christianity, as patronage of these deities fell away. Roman pushback most often took the form of Rome making Christians feel like outsiders as Roman culture punished them for not meshing with Roman polytheistic society. There were regulations adopted that *seemed* to single Christians out and discouraged true Romans from doing business with Christians owned businesses. In fact, Acts 19 speaks of an artisan that made his living by crafting idols small and large, of the goddess, Diana. (The patron deity of Ephesus). When the apostle Paul and his group preached Jesus and many people turned to Christ, this particular artisan began to feel the pinch as fewer and fewer people were buying. So he stirred up the city officials by raising issues of heritage being lost, traditions being forgotten, and all that made Ephesus what it was; being compromised. This led to a town meeting where specific voices played on the town's people with these stories and ultimately there was a riot and Paul and his company had to be taken out of town by the local magistrates as emotions were so heated against Christians that death threats were being uttered.

On an almost opposite trajectory in 2012 two men went into a Colorado bakery and asked about ordering a wedding cake. The baker, Mr. Philips responded, “I’ll make you birthday cakes, shower cakes, cookies, brownies,” Mr. Phillips recalled saying. ‘I just can’t make a cake for a same-sex wedding.’ The New York Times quotes Mr. Mullins (one of the gay couple in question) as saying he remembered being stunned by Mr. Phillip’s comment. “We were mortified and just felt degraded,” he said. The couple filed discrimination charges, and they won before a civil rights commission and in the courts.⁷⁹ The 2015 ruling in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, No. 16-111 is an example of how Christians are being treated more and more frequently in America. No one as yet, has been burned at the stake as Michael Servitis was in Geneva, or as the young woman who were accused of witchcraft were in Salem, Massachusetts; but predicated on how those events ultimately played out, one can see the potential for storm clouds on the horizon in the United States.

It is not directly about spirituality and religion, as secularism wants to be seen as rational and non-religious. As the wedding cake case was brought before the United States Supreme court in 2017, the New York Times reports that Justice Anthony Kennedy, referring to the 2015 commission’s judgement and declarations, expressed “sympathy for the rights of gay men and lesbians. But he also indicated that he believed the civil rights commission had mistreated Mr. Phillips. He quoted from the remarks of one commissioner who called Mr. Phillips’s position despicable, and he seemed troubled by a part of the commission’s ruling that required Mr. Phillips to retrain his staff.”⁸⁰

There are many fascinating, heated, and deeply emotional issues in this case for the very

⁷⁹ Adam Liptak, "Justices Sharply Divided in Wedding Cake Case," New York Times, accessed December 05, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/05/us/politics/supreme-court-same-sex-marriage-cake.html>

⁸⁰ Ibid.

reasons being discussed here. The Bible's position on homosexuality, religious freedom, civil rights, and much more. And while discussion of all these would be interesting and perhaps relevant; the discussion here is not whether the Mr. Phillips was right to stand by his beliefs in Bible; or the Bible's credibility in a historical or sociological way (a discussion for the next chapter) but rather the arguments and tone of the court proceedings and whether they take on a secular, yet religiously Calvinistic lens of legalism. The arguments before the Supreme Court continue,

Mr. Phillips says that he should not be forced to use his talents to convey a message of support for same-sex marriage. The couple, Charlie Craig and David Mullins, say that businesses open to the public should not be allowed to discriminate against gay men and lesbians. The more liberal justices probed whether all sorts of artisans — tailors, hair stylists, makeup artists, chefs — could refuse to supply goods and services for same-sex weddings. Conservative justices considered whether artists can be required to convey messages with which they profoundly disagree. Justice Sonia Sotomayor appeared unpersuaded. “When have we ever given protection to a food?”⁸¹

What is being argued here is that this is an example of a Calvinistic legalism sociologically weaponized against Christianity. Of course, no one can say what someone else is thinking or make an empirical declaration about what someone meant when they said something. But one can note attitudes, apparent biases, and comments that seem to suggest a mindset or perception. Justice Sotomayor's question, “When have we ever given protection to a food” seems intended on the surface, to undermine the validity of the argument that Philip's cake baking was his own business, and not subject to a civil rights consideration. It would be interesting to see what she thinks she knows about what the Bible says about homosexuality, and more important, why the Bible takes the positions that it does?

⁸¹ Ibid.

A customer is not regimented or forced to do business with providers of services they don't want to do business with. The customer, no matter their sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or language, can take his or her business where he or she wants. And more, can conduct the manner of that business privately with whatever business concern he or she wants. The customer may be subjectively choosing to do business with one business and not with another. At least that much, no one seems to be arguing; but if that is so, then in turn, should not the opposite argument hold? A business owner should be able to provide goods, or give service to whoever he or she chooses in like manner? In fact, not only is there a societal acknowledgment and acceptance of this practice; but there is actually legal precedent and personal experience on the part of every single justice sitting on the supreme court adjudicating the case, including Justice Sotomayor. Does not a private attorney offer a public service of legal counsel simply by hanging a shingle on the door as "attorney at law"? Yet she or he still retains the right to accept a client subjectively, solely based on the personal preference of council. A licensed attorney has the option of simply declining a case and giving no explanation whatsoever to the client for his or her refusal to take their case. But are the civil rights of the gay couple or the religious rights of the baker the only issue being considered by the Supreme court? True enough Biblical Christianity does in fact argue against homosexuality; and the discussion of why is very interesting, but not really the point here. A biblically defined Christian, in distinction to the runaway religious regulations of Calvin's Geneva society, will never force people to stop doing things that are not Biblical; they will love, respect, show kindness and courtesy to everyone; regardless of personal choice and further, they will model Christ's behavior in their own life as an example up to the point that they show favor to humanity over Biblically

expressed paradigms of God's heart and character. Some Christians would agree with Mr. Phillips on the wedding cake matter - that baking a cake for a gay wedding shows tacit approval of homosexuality and puts them in a position of pleasing culture over God. And without a doubt, this line in the sand truly exists for all Christians. Other Christians would argue that baking a wedding cake is not the demarcation line. Either way, the real issue secularism has with Christianity is not whether the Bible says something is wrong; but it seems to be more concerned with Christianity's constant warnings to culture stating the biblical consequences of following a path that is clearly not in line with Biblical teaching about a specific issue. These seemingly constant cultural interjections of Christianity are perceived as condescending judgements that make people feel bad about themselves. But Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would do this very thing (convict of sin) in the Gospel of John; and thus, convince humanity of its error in the hope that they would change course and end up with God and not separated from him. Convincing/conviction would be realized via an inner spiritual sense, but would be raised externally by those who preach and teach Christ. It would be expressed by saying what Jesus stands for as well as what he stands against. It is not all negative, it is mostly positive; but the negative that is present is an unceasing, unwanted reminder, that while one can do as they please, there is a consequence for not doing what pleases God.

The issues being taken up in the US Supreme court are about both gay rights and religious freedom but there are other considerations in this complex case. The gay couple could still go to another cake-baker who was willing to help them get their cake. But the Civil Rights Commission's ruling *seems* to frame the Christian baker as a bad person because of his stand based on his belief in what the Bible teaches about homosexuality

which is clearly the reason he would not bake the cake. Forcing the baker do what he did not want to do (bake the cake anyway), and then humiliating him, as a warning to others (in a very Puritan kind of way) by forcing him to retrain his staff to conduct business in a manner violating his own biblical beliefs as an example to other Christians who might try to assert their beliefs on people; is very similar to what evolved in the Calvinistic Geneva society and later in the American colonies. And as already stated, what is different here, just as it was in Geneva where Calvinist used a theological system of justice; secularism could be said to use the non-religious mechanics of Calvinism here. The similarity marked by the commission's wording of their judgement to justify it, such as Mr. Phillips was “despicable”. The ruling against Mr. Phillips was based in the commission’s concern for the social justice of the gay couple. Mr. Phillip’s action based on his belief “mortified” the gay couple and that mortification was the justification of both the ruling and the judgement of the Civil Rights Commission.

Calvin likely would never have dreamed or intended for his legal-theological intellectualism to be used in such a ways. He was, without question, trying to help humanity understand God better in the hope that it would make people treat each other better as they were emulating God’s character. It is important to remember that all this is not to condemn Calvin or his theology; but to show that a wrong application of it; one that has occasionally done harm; and more, has afforded it to be anthropologically weaponized religiously so as to occasionally justify discriminatory behaviors against Christianity by distorting Christian and biblical ethics and social justice as motifs for assigning good and bad. How so? Taking up again, the societal use of the term

“judgemental”. Firstly, the Bible not only concedes, but embraces what non-religious American culture denies in itself, and condemns in Christianity.

Both brand anthropologically, the act of “judging” as a normal human activity. It is not evil of itself. It is not bad if done well. It is not wrong as an aspect of human behavior. In fact, it can’t be avoided.

It is natural for humankind to judge. If people are created in God’s image; would they not naturally judge in a small way as God does in a transcendent and omnipotent way? Humanity’s fallen state did not rob it of its natural propensity to judge. Instead it caused a skewing and distortion of human judgment, and thus perverted God’s justice system; one meant to be shared in the betterment of humankind.

Human judgment systems often say something is “bad” when the Bible says that God calls the same thing “good”. Human justice systems and governmental judgements are historical realities. The Hague, the United States Supreme Court, and others, exist as evolved and processed intellectualizations of human thought on what constitutes proper judgements for the greater good of society with a view on both justice and mercy. But theologically, these justice systems of government are now imperfect, fallen, and flawed because humankind is. Without divine influence and divine justice which is perfect, human justice will be imperfect and rarely tempered by fairness or mercy.

Animals have collective instinctual behaviors resulting in individual judgements that may marginalize or punish other animals in the herd or pack; but only human judgment is intellectualized, rationalized, as contemplated-comprehensions resulting in a culturally collective responses to subjective and specific human behaviors.

Jesus describes himself as the judge of all people and all things. (John 5) There are two justifications for Jesus' declaring of himself the most Supreme Justice. Jesus is the human expression of the Father (God) who satisfied divine justice for humanity's shortcomings by his sacrificial death. Through that sacrifice he assumed the punishment for each individual offence to God's divine character. This sacrificial death is then coupled with the only historical account of a human being authoritatively taking up his own human life again after it had ended. This event is authenticated by the testimony of over 500 eyewitnesses. Secondly, Jesus' judgments are just because they are not motivated by human ideas of justice, which are skewed and perverted. Jesus' judgments are solely predicated on the Father's subjectively perfect character which is the only standard setter.

This "standard" is what Friedrich Nietzsche's own atheistic deism was recognizing. Nietzsche's concept of *eternal return* is only expressed by attaching Jesus' Sermon on the Mount conceptualism to his own, "blessed are the forgetful, for they get the better even of their blunders." This "standard" is Martin Heidegger's *Dasein*; the thing by which all things can be determined to be things. Therefore, human judgement (being judgey) is in an inevitable consequence of what it is to be human. And it is not bad of itself - it is the human state of fallenness in being... this causes the badness of human "judginess" and hence, makes being judgmentalistic in society a bad thing. The distorted Calvinistic legal ploy used by secular culture occurs when secular, non-religious, religiously is crafted to make a biblical judgment against biblical judgments.

By perverting Calvin's theological system, American culture (whether through the media, science, or academia) can enthrone itself on the seat of judgement and displace Jesus; and subsequently justify marginalization, bring persecution, levy repression, assert

oppression, and initiate punitivity of governmental action against, not only Christianity, but any idea or process of thought, that is seen as a threat to its power.

American secularism is not about giving equality to all human religious traditions; it is about human deification by the rejection of Christ as the deity. Jesus is a threat to human ways not in harmony with God's ways; and because the Bible says what God's ways are, they subsequently make people feel bad about themselves.

Therefore, the remedy for this is to cast the Bible in a light that shows it to be imperfect and flawed. Otherwise, humanity is responsible and accountable for knowing the Bible and applying what it says to themselves, both individually and corporately.

Whether one agrees that all this constitutes confused Calvinism via a secularization in America or not, the fact remains... that the Bible has had, and continues to have, a dramatic impact on Europe and the United States today; and thus, the tension between secularism and Christianity.

If that is not the case, it is again ironic, that there is such a long-standing pushback against deism and Christianity in particular, by secularism; one that often *seems* to make a concerted effort to discredit the possibility of the Bible's divine origins and importance in contemporary culture. Yet if one makes such an attestation, academia, science, or secular influences in America are likely to smile and respond by saying, "not at all. You have the right to believe what you want. There is no conspiracy here; life is just happening in America and the Bible is not a part of it anymore." Actually, they are telling the truth for the most part. The majority of secularists are not consciously conspiring against the Bible or Christianity. They have no idea why they feel as they do. They are not theologians, historians, sociologists, or anthropologists.

To comprehend this one must put on all of those hats at once.

But if one does not want to do that, they can just read it for themselves in Oxford University Press's 2017 publication of "*The Bible in American Life*". This is a scientific collective of valid sociological data with over 300 pages of recent and relevant research, statistics, charts, graphs, and other quantifiability. It is a work combining thirty contributors from many disciplines including religious studies, sociology, anthropology, history, and dozens of studies and polls considering ethnicities, geography, income, race, language spoken and much more as a part of the equation.

The data is rather telling. In the broadest stroke possible, it says that 50% of Americans regularly read some kind of religious text or scripture. Living in the U.S. today, listening to the media, and more, might lead one to surmise that even if that were true; the reading of a *religious text* would be likely to evenly correspond to those who practice diverse religious traditions; for example, Muslims reading the Koran, Buddhists the writings of Buddha, Hindus reading Hindu texts, and so forth. This would seem reasonable considering America's very diverse culture of religious traditions.

But the 2017 data showing that of those 50% of Americans who read some kind of religious text regularly - 95% of them only consult the Bible as their source of guidance. Many more periodically read the Bible, and even more still, believe it is good thing and should be the guiding paradigm for society.

"Bible readers rated the extent to which they consulted the Bible on a number of issues. Grouping readers who said they did so to 'a moderate extent', 'to a considerable extent', and 'to a great extent' we found that respondents overwhelmingly turned to the

scripture for personal growth and to learn about faith as compared to other reasons.”⁸² In fact, according to Gallup, nearly eight in ten Americans regard the Bible as either the literal word of God or inspired by God. At the same time, surveys have revealed gaps in these same Americans' biblical literacy.⁸³ In other words, they may read it, believe it, and respect it; but don't always know or really understand exactly what it says about a given subject.

Another brief but intriguing soiree down a proverbial rabbit hole might be very enlightening and helpful in understanding all this:

For example, popular notions in American culture are the Bible says the earth is flat; whereas Isaiah said it was round in the 6th century B.C. (Isaiah 40) Or, the Bible says the earth is only 6,000 years old, which it never does. These ideas are often reinforced by biblically illiterate Christians who have pitted them against such theories as the Big Bang, which asserts the earth to be over 4.5 billion years old. For decades, secularism, science, and academia have scoffed and ridiculed Christians and the Bible for saying the earth is new and young. The idea that the bible says the earth is 6000 years old comes from the genealogy of Noah in Genesis 4, overlaying Christ's own genealogy in Matthew and Luke, and adding approximately 2000 years between the first century and the 21st. That is well and good, but this dating does not start the clock at creation; it starts it at the fall of man (when humanity left the Garden of Eden). Therefore, the bible does not state the age of the earth.

Other theologians have noted this with theological theories such as “the Gap theory” asserting that there was a “gap” of time between the creation of earth in Gen. 1:1

⁸² Philip Goff, Arthur Farnsley, and Peter Thuesen, eds., *The Bible in American Life* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 20.

⁸³ Ibid. p. xix

and the creation of man. Or the idea that God's concept of a day may be millions of years not twenty-four hours. But this has been countered with the fact that the Genesis' account of creation uses the Hebrew word for "day", יוֹם (yowm). The primary function of this Hebrew word is a single 24 hour, day and because of that, the Genesis account can only mean six - 24 hour days of creation. But that idea is wholly not holy. (pun intended)

The sun, originating gravity's influence on earth, causing it to spin at 24,898 miles per hour (40,070 kilometers according to NASA) is the means by which the 24 hour day is calculated. If the means to calculate the 24 hour day and the human calendar in general, was not created until *day four* of the six day process; and if light was created on day one, but not the sun's light or its gravitational effect on earth - the fact that the Hebrew word "yowm" is used may, or may not have bearing on whether "day" was actually twenty four hours. It literally means "from sun to sun". But in Genesis 1:5 the Bible uses the same Hebrew word to express not a single 24 hour day; but rather *a point in time* where there was no sun.

Human, Hebrew writers, had to express time in creation with the linguistic tools at their disposal. There was really no other way to say what they wanted to say other than the word "yowm" in Hebrew. Just as the English word "day" can mean *a point in time*, for example: "Back in the day children had to walk to school in freezing temperatures while blizzard-like winds blew" meaning, during a bygone era of time, children did not ride a bus but had it harder than they do today. They had to walk.

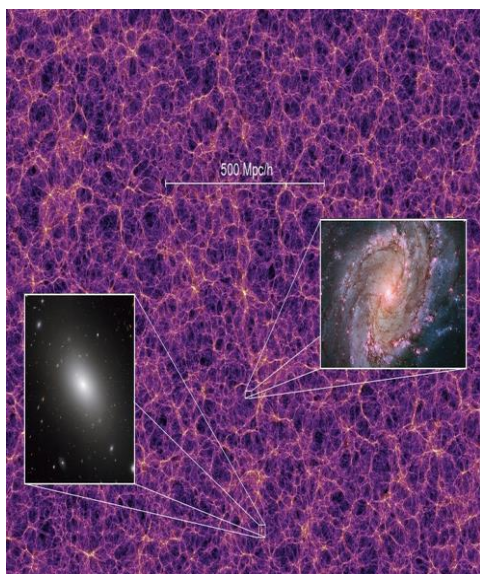
There are many places in the Torah where the Hebrew word, "yowm" is used similarly. It has been used to describe the "birthing" of a season or historical epoch. In fact Genesis 2:17 where it is used to describe that "point in time". Genesis 2:17 says, "but

of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for *in the day* (at that point in time) that you eat of it you shall surely die.” The same can be said of Leviticus 7:36, “The LORD commanded this to be given them by the people of Israel, from the *day* that he anointed them.” Six, 24 hour days of creation is often argued for by Christian apologists because any other ideas of its meaning are seen to validate, or at least lend support, to the Big Bang Theory or Darwinistic evolution in opposition to the Biblical narrative. But that is not the case at all.

Even if the six days of creation were six 24 hour periods, so what? Einstein’s theory of relativity demonstrates that time does not necessarily progress linearly at the same rate for objects that are near gravity wells, such as black hole, or a neutron star, as it does for objects that are further away from them. What does that have to do with it?

If someone could have been present at creation with a digital clock, then perhaps six 24 hour days might be measured; but if creation occurred in relationship to, or in proximity of one of these gravitational events; then first of all, one must account for a place to contain earth in order for earth to contain humankind. Consider again, what the bible actually says... “In the beginning God created THE HEAVENS and the earth.” This has always been read as simultaneous action. But in fact, it was one action in two concurrent steps. The heavens (spacetime) needed to be created first so there would be a place for earth to be once it existed. Earth could not exist without *being* somewhere. Einstein’s theory of general relativity consequently leads to a singularity at the center of every gravitational event (the idea of the Big Bang when the singularity explodes) but that is where the theory stops answering questions and starts raising them. A singularity is a single point where everything drawn into the gravity well is compacted into a single

point that is infinitely dense. The Big Bang does not answer the questions of where the matter came from or what caused it to collapse etc. This is one of the issues vexing Einstein, the issue of “first cause”. Laying the issue of where all of this swirling gas and matter come from aside, and just looking into the gravity event itself; anything drawn into the event (like a black hole) would be destroyed. However, in 2006 Abhay Ashtekar of the University of Pennsylvania and his team applied LQG (Loop Quantum Gravity) to the idea of the Big Bang. “LQG combines general relativity with quantum mechanics and defines space-time as a web of indivisible chunks of 10^{-35} metres in size. The team found that as they rewound time in an LQG universe, they reached the Big Bang, but there was no singularity - instead they were able to cross a quantum bridge into



a much older universe”⁸⁴

This possibility has been the premise for many science fiction works, but it also affords a possible (albeit theoretical) accounting of Genesis. Without spacetime, there would be no place for earth to be. But if the *older universe* is actually the eternal dimension, the spiritual dimension, (eternity); then this could be the process by which the universe came into being. Matter, antimatter,

dark matter, are ejected from God’s place of being in eternity through, or across this quantum bridge and “the heavens” as we call them, (space) become a reality as we know it. This empty universe of space is an artificial bubble floating in eternity (the older

⁸⁴ Frank Swain, ed., *The Universe Next Door: A Journey through 55 Parallel Worlds and Possible Futures*, ed. Frank Swain, New Scientist (Boston, MA: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2017).

universe). Then the earth is created at the point of convergence between spacetime and eternity. But as both space and the earth in space, are pushed further and further from the crossing place between God's creative point in eternity and away from it (hence the universe is expanding when actually, the universe may be static in size but the created matter in it is moving further from the point of creation hence, making it seem that the earth is expanding. (Or might the bubble be expanding?) Of course, this is only one brief theoretical expose of how the Genesis account might be seen from the standpoint of physics. For example, if one drives down the highway at seventy miles an hour, and a passenger in the car sees a mountain in the distance, as the car progresses it seems to the passenger that the mountain is moving away in space and thus, the earth must be getting bigger as it does so. Of course, the occupant realizes this is ridiculous and correctly concludes that the relative distance between the moving car and the mountain is growing at the rate by which the car is traveling. Einstein seems to suggest this in *The Special Theory of Relativity* when he states,

Even though classical mechanics does not supply us with a sufficiently broad basis for the theoretical presentation of all physical phenomena, still we must grant it a considerable measure of "truth," since it supplies us with the actual motions of the heavenly bodies with a delicacy of detail little short of wonderful. The principle of relativity must therefore apply with great accuracy in the domain of mechanics.⁸⁵

He seems to indirectly be referring to this in his discussion of inertial and gravitational mass. Of course, he is talking about the perceptions of gravity and motion, but in his "man standing in a chest" illustration (something akin to a person standing in an elevator) if there is movement the observer senses either a lesser or greater sense of pressure (gravity). In a similar way, "the observer will further convince himself that the

⁸⁵ Albert Einstein, *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory; A Popular Exposition*, 19th ed. (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2010, 1920), 16.

acceleration of the body towards the floor of the chest is always of the same magnitude, whatever kind of body he may happen to use for the experiment.”⁸⁶ In other words, it seems to the man that his body is being accelerated to the floor from his stationary point in the chest; but in reality, the chest itself is moving and he is forced to move with it; and the perception is his movement, not the chest. What I am proposing is that the perceptions of the universe expanding are simply perceptions of the matter in it that are moving with it; but regardless of whether the “universe” is expanding in space or the matter within it is moving; the earth’s current location in spacetime has changed relative to matter’s expulsion (or injection like an astronomical hypodermic needle, depending on your frame of reference) into the bubble (the universe); and as matter moves away from the event horizon of the point of creation (a gravity event), relative time begins to slow. This speaks of the point of convergence, where spacetime exists and connects with, whatever is across the quantum bridge (the eternal dimension, or as Einstein called it: the 4th Dimension). If it were possible to measure time in terms of how one might calculate time on earth (in 24 hour days) theoretically, the process of creation might have occurred in six days.

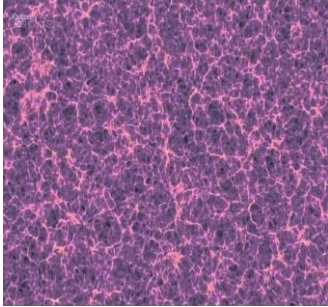
But consider a cosmic event, possibly a Black hole, drawing matter into it by an irresistible force of gravity; would it not theoretically, as per LQG theory, expel that matter on the other side with the same velocity by which it attracted it at the entry side? There, in eternity (and eternity theologically does not contain God - it exists because God exists... and thus, eternity is). Matter would then exist on that side in an incomprehensible (to humanity) state but it is expressed as divine thought (God’s). It is conceived and then spoken by God - this brings matter into existence (spacetime) and thus, it appears on our

⁸⁶ Ibid.

side of the LQG bridge. It is repelled away from the event horizon just as matter on our side is attracted to it. So technically the creation event would be a white hole in eternity as it works in diametrically theoretical opposition to a black hole. The velocity of the newly created matter slows as it moves further and further away from the convergence point between the dimensions and thus, time slows down (as per Einstein's relativity). Therefore, an indeterminable period of time ensues. Six days at the point of creation where matter comes into being as it passes through a type of cosmic birth canal, but perhaps, billions of years pass as the matter moves further away from the point to its current relative location to the point of creation. And thus, "the gap" between the "heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1) is an undetermined measurement of time on our side. The possibilities are staggering. For the theoretical observer with the stopwatch, six days pass; for matter coming into being some 14 billion years. To God, the universe was created last week. Humanity and all human history in the last few seconds or even less.

Reflecting again on how this relates to Calvin - Calvin (as well as Catholics and nearly all Evangelicals for that matter) believed in the significance of the Bible as a divine text, allowing it to influence society in the sixteenth century; but what is being argued here is, though secularized and sanitized from religious terminology, much of American society including science, continues to find itself engaged with the Bible as it is coming back again and again to assert its logic and relevance. For example, the biblical posit that eternity (the place or dimension of God's being) is the ultimate destiny for humanity. But humankind is not eternal going back; yet if the universe can be considered as a womb to enable a starting place for a humanity (humankind could not start in eternity because it is not eternal in the past) but by having a place to come into being, humankind

could be made to exist as eternal going forward) by being in a temporary place for its development.



The idea of a quantum birth canal may be more appropriate than a quantum bridge. And the universe is more like the human placenta than just the egg sac. It nurtures the human fetus until birth is possible. Consider a computerized projected image of the “cosmic web” of galaxies

comprising “the universe” (left) and the unmistakable similarity on the (right) of the human placenta. While certainly not a perfect match by any means, it's hard to deny a visceral correlation (distant as it may seem), between the two. Does it mean anything? Truth be told: one could say it does or one could it does not; and both would have an even chance at being right. But the comparison does leave a truly open-minded person with a bit of sense of wonder.

In this way, the Bible’s use of “day” as a 24 hour period works. The young earth/old earth argument (in an epistemic way) is not really as significant as some people think, as the Bible is compatible with all of these theoretical ideas.

Consider the measured radioactive decay of carbon in fossils. This measurement has been used for decades as an evidence in the fossil record of earth’s age. But in recent years it has been discovered that the decay rate was more rapid in the distant past than the recent past. Overtime the rate of decay has slowed down. But why? There are many scientific speculations, and many of the ideas about the earth being old originate in them. But if radioactive decay was faster in the past; What does that mean? Whatever spin a

scientist or college professor may put on it - the real truth is that science simply does not really know one way or the other.

If the aforementioned idea of time slowing down as the earth moved further from the point of creation is correct, then it could account for the decay of radioactivity being faster in the past. But it could also simply mean that earth is much younger than ever imagined. That is not something academia or science in general, wants to consider because once again, the century old paradigm of self-propagation would have to be disturbed.

For decades scientists have used the Grand Canyon as a geological “poster-child” to show the earth as billions of years old in that one can see the different strata in layers on the canyon walls; and that these layers were laid down over millions and millions of years. In fact, Bill Nye (surnamed the *science guy*) was in a debate a few years ago with a biblical creationist and used these layered strata of the Grand Canyon as his proof that the earth was billions of years old and not 6,000 years.

But the Grand Canyon for “old earthers” has very recently begun to be critiqued differently, as geologists, looking much closer, at the rock strata are considering evidence of something quite unexpected. All of this is very intriguing but will not be dealt with here as this is not a stand alone science paper; but in a broad stroke, this is what is geologically surfacing: The beautifully laid strata of rock and sediment in the Grand Canyon could never be preserved like it exists with erosion taking its toll over millions and millions of years. Much of the canyon would be filled by now as the sheer cliffs would have collapsed millions of years ago. For them to be in the state they are today, the canyon would likely not be formed from advancing and retreating glaciers, but of a single

or series of brief cataclysmic water events that could only have occurred in the last few thousand years. This event, or few events, involved a large body of water, held in place by a natural dike of earth and rock. Erosion weakened the dam little by little as it finally collapsed under the immense weight, releasing billions of gallons of water. This incredible release would be under such hydro-dynamic pressure that the water would have sent a tsunami of water literally cutting the grand canyon in minutes as it went through that area. That much water, moving that fast, would have been like a laser on the rock strata. When the water receded, the beautifully view layers we see today going down into the canyon were left behind. This may sound crazy to a status quo geologist but there is a geologically rational case being made for this by significant numbers of geologist holding PhD's from some of the most imminent universities in the world. Not to debate this issue here, the point being, it shows how something rationally believed to be old might also be rationally intellectualized as young. It's the miles not the age, kind of conceptualism.

Certainly most geologists are not all in harmony with this theory by a long shot. Stephen O. Moshier, professor and chair of the Geology & Environmental Science Department at Wheaton College, (a Christian creationist) attests to many geologic evidences of global flooding, yet not in the formation of the Grand Canyon. He asserts "flood geologists have failed to conceive a physical model for catastrophic formation that is consistent with the real geology of the Grand Canyon."⁸⁷ But regardless, the Bible does not specifically address all of these issues except through a theological conceptualism in a context of humankind's destiny. Science is forever seeking to know things about the

⁸⁷ Stephen Mosheir, "Flood Geology and the Grand Canyon: What Does the Evidence Really Say?," *Biologos*, June 29, 2016, <https://biologos.org/blogs/archive/flood-geology-and-the-grand-canyon-what-does-the-evidence-really-say> (accessed December 11, 2017).

universe so that it can say where humanity came from and thus, humanity will know itself better. What, one may ask, does any of this wild conjecture have to do with Calvin's influence on American and western culture? Quite a lot actually. Because all of this speaks to the presence of the Bible's continuing influence in society and to simply demonstrate that it has a voice whether one agrees with what it says or not.

If... Calvin's bend of legalistically interpreted scripture has in fact, served as an overlay of significance on secularism; then secular or not; it is still an overlay of theological intellectualism originating in the scripture. And if science and academia are fueling secularism in the United States, then both the relevance of the Bible and society's compatibility with it, are a determinant factor at the very heart of nearly every cultural conflict; and as such, the Bible would rationally then be the only real tool of conflict resolution.

In other words, if everyone is using the Bible (every segment and facet of culture) whether it is masked in secularism and rebranded as non-theistic, or whether it is a legalistic posit of Christianity applied in a non-Christian way; whether it is known and recognized as such or not; in any case it cannot be ignored and claimed as non sequitur to American society without egregious results of confusion being infused within the culture; and sadly, that is likely what has already occurred. Especially, if perversions of the Bible, whether from those who apply secularism in a Calvinistic way, or via the misapplied nationalism that *some* evangelical Christians promulgate; it is only by an undistorted understanding of the Bible that humanity can find solutions to the major cultural conflicts it faces internally and externally.

But is that even possible? Can humanity see the Bible as God intended it to be seen? Donald McKim points out that while Calvin believed in divine inspiration of the scripture and its inerrancy, he also believed Jewish capacity to comprehend it, both spiritually and intellectually was achieved as a progression of maturation. And while these fascinating facts and cloistered truths are couched and layered into the fabric of Genesis, Calvin believed that Moses received divine revelations on Sinai and coupled them with existing oral traditions that had been passed down. And further, that the compilation process of integration was itself, part of the divine process of inspiration. Whether he had assistance from scribes or not is not germane as Moses, who had just received divine revelation on Sinai, oversaw and approved the final draft. This is all significant in Calvin's ideas about how scripture is similarly posited into culture. Secularism and pluralism often see "godlessness" (no deity involved) as an almost non-theistic metaphysical revelation of intellectualism that somehow assimilates a society in a non-deistically spiritual way. And that the removal of spirituality from the worldview of humanity is a kind of evolutionary progression of natural, supernaturalism of thought.

The idea that if God is removed from the equation of all the differing ideas in humanity, then conflict over those different ideas about God will also be removed from society. As views about the eternal state of humankind and God are more important than anything to humanity then they are worth dying for, or worth killing for. So if these views are negated, then killing for them on behalf of God, will stop.

As stated earlier, atheists like Hegel and Marx erroneously intermingled theism with religion to reach that conclusion. Examples of why it is easy for the smartest people to buy into this is on both sides of American society; smaller segments of secular society

believe so strongly in the efficacy of non theistic morality that they might be willing to start a “just war” for what they believe is the greater good (an influence of Augustinian thought). If not, they are certainly clearly willing to fight daily in a cultural war. They march, chant, and marginalize who they perceive as the other (often what they refer to as the religious right) on social media, television, and in print.

What is at the root of this potential willingness to stir an angry, pitchfork bearing peasant mob and incite them to burn someone at the stake?

On the other side of the coin there are individuals who claim to be evangelical Christian, and believe so strongly in the cause of ending the silent Holocaust; that they are willing to do anything, including persecute, marginalize, and even murder the proponents of abortion to stop the killing of unborn children (which is also a kind of war declared for the greater good). This would include bombing an abortion clinic or murdering the doctors that perform abortions. A distorted Calvinistic intellectualization is at both ends of this cultural bungee, pulling it further apart. It is impacting American society and even using scripture as a blunt object to hurt others (judge not that you be not judged” or “you shall not kill”). Calvin speaks of “individuals whom God on occasion ‘raises up...from among his servants,’ and ‘arms...with is command to punish the wicked government and deliver his people....from miserable calamity’ In such a case... ‘when they had been sent by God’s lawful calling to carry out such acts, they clearly did not at all violate that majesty which is implanted in kings by God’s ordination.’”⁸⁸

This thinking on both sides, is similar to expressives of Calvin’s views about Moses’ writing of Genesis. “We have said, that Moses, by a homely and uncultivated

⁸⁸ Donald K. McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 185.

style, accommodates what he delivers to the capacity of the people; and for the best reason; for not only had he to instruct an untaught race of men, but the existing age of the Church was so puerile, that it was unable to receive any higher instruction.”⁸⁹

According to Calvin, the capacities of the Israelites developed progressively over time, so that they began as young children and progressed to adolescence. At the time of the narrative of Genesis the Jews were at their most untrained and immature level, something that readers of Genesis need to keep in mind.⁹⁰ But briefly going back to the Garden of Eden to examine what it actually says versus what many Christians think they know of it. If one takes the *time* to read Genesis carefully, one might be shocked to find there are several “gaps” (periods of time) that are unspecified in length and purpose, and they have been clearly inserted into the Genesis narrative that way. This is an important discussion here in that elements of both Christianity and secular science keep tugging on opposite ends of the question of man’s origins. For many scientists there is no conflict, they believe in a theory that is not proven empirically as though it were fact; just as Christians believe in the Bible without, what many would call, the necessary quantifiable evidence of God’s involvement. If one puts their ear to the rails, so to speak, one can hear the cultural trains coming and going. Debates, articles, panel discussions about God’s existence, Darwinism, the Big Bang, the Noahic flood, how long a “day” is, and much more. These tensions are being asserted on both ends of the culture in universities, documentaries, and debates all over the world.

Consider what the Bible really says. Adam and Eve were created before the Garden existed. They lived on earth outside the place where the garden would be. How

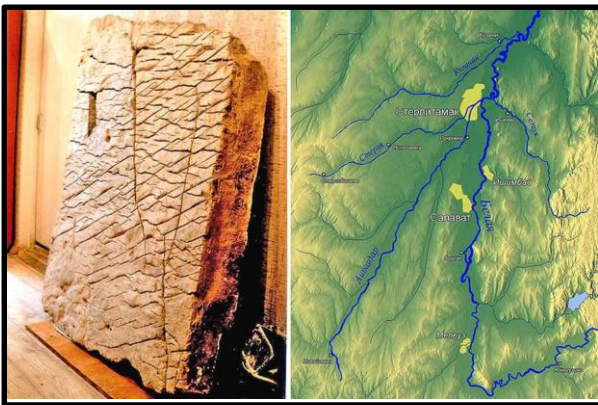
⁸⁹ Calvin, John. *Comm. Gen. 3:1 CO* xxiii:53C; CTS 1:141. Ethereal Library <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom01.ix.i.html> (accessed 12/9/17)

⁹⁰ McKim, *Calvin and the Bible*, 5.

long did they exist in this pre-Edenic earth? The answer is not given but they were told by God to reproduce, populate the earth, and “subdue it”. (take the resources of earth and use them) The idea that Cain and Abel were the first children born to Adam and Eve is unbiblical. Cain and Abel are likely the first two children born to Adam and Eve after the fall, and more importantly, after Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden - but we are given the impression in scripture that untold epochs of time may have passed between humankind's’ creation and Adam and Eve’s insertion into the Garden of Eden prior to the fall. After Cain killed his brother and flees to the east, Genesis says he took a wife from the people in that area. If Cain and Abel were the only children born to Adam and Eve to that point - Cain obviously would not have been able to find a bride to take. There is an enormous body of archeological evidence that humanity has existed in some past state; and that evidence is mounting all over earth.

To say “evidence is mounting all over earth” is a bold declarative but it might be

appropriate. One single and intriguing example of many



(some without doubt are hoaxes and are easily explained away as well they should be) but as of this date there are fascinating and archaeological and historical anomalies that so far, are not so easily dismissed.

The “Dashka Stone” Named for the daughter of its discoverer, Alexander Chuvyrov, Doctor of

Physical and Mathematical science, professor of Bashkir State University in the Russian Federation. Chuvyrov, is a Soviet era professor that has ironically dubbed the find “The Creator Map”.

Chuvyrov is published and everything he has done has been by the book, so to speak. Its important to point out that nearly all of the scholarly discourse regarding this find has a potential to upset the apple cart of known history. Yet science and academia are intrigued and seem more astonished than threatened. What most of them don't realize is that this find is very compatible with the Genesis story and can be seen to corroborate the possible timeline and events being discussed here. The point being, sooner or later the Bible and science end up having a conversation when there is a new discovery or idea. It does not always polarize.

Jonathan Golden, Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Comparative Religion holds a PhD in Anthropology (University of Pennsylvania, 1998), specializing in the study of ancient and modern cultures of the Middle East, commented in a 2015 seminar discussion on the subject of the Bible's account of creation as opposed to Darwinism, "At least the Bible got the order of creation right"⁹¹ (meaning that the order of created life in the Bible (what was created on what day) is in harmony with the order of how life came into being in a broad sense, via Darwinistic evolution. The very fact that he made this comment (even if it was just out of politeness and fairness) signifies that an ongoing discussion about the Bible continues in classrooms and demonstrates that whether the Bible is seen through a confused Calvinistic lens or not, American society continues to be both influenced and engaged with it.

As to the Dashka stone? Pravda, r.u., successor to the former Soviet news-source now privatized, reported in 2002, "Scientists of Bashkir State University have found indisputable proof of an ancient highly developed civilization's existence. The question is

⁹¹ Jonathan Golden, "Religion, Culture, and Conflict", Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, October 2015

about a great plate found in 1999, with a picture of the region done according to an unknown technology. This is a relief map. Today's military has similar maps. The map contains civil engineering works: a system of channels with a length of about 12000 km, weirs, and powerful dams."⁹² Interesting factoids have emerged over the two decades since the stone was found emanating from the results of a myriad of tests conducted by leading respected specialists in a host of disciplines from all over the world.

- The stone's age is uncertain but it is most certainly thousands of years old
- It is three dimensional and was cut in relief by a precise tool akin to a computer controlled laser and not by a chisel and hammer
- It is about one ton, six inches thick, and is made of dolomite, diopside glass with a silicon mixture for strength (mixing diopside glass with Silicon was first done in 1985 but so far nothing like the process used in the stone has been replicated and is currently beyond modern technical abilities); the third layer is porcelain
- There are dams and canals portrayed on the stone showing public works projects that are well beyond the scope of anything possible today, at least not without bankrupting half the nations on earth
- The topography in the stone's relief has been confirmed by several qualified parties (including NASA) as an actual map of the area where the stone was found and not a geologic coincidence
- In order to create such a map one would need to have a vantage point of low earth orbit
- The stone is believed to be one piece of a world map of stones measuring 1000 meters across (this one was discovered because of a search resulting from a discovered archive stating there were over 200 such stones seen in the area back in the 18th century)

These bullet points are pretty dramatic but are actually only part of the enigmatic list of facts about the stone that have been confirmed. Dating the age of the stone is one thing geologically, but dating the relief created in the stone is perhaps the most intriguing part of the artifact. Two fossils are present that have been proven beyond a doubt, not to have been there when the carving of the relief was done. The fossils are of two species of

⁹² "The Map of 'The Creator'," *Pravda.ru*, April 30, 2002, <http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/30-04-2002/42113-0/> (accessed January 8, 2018).

animals extinct for millions of years. But regardless of that, there is little question that the stone will change humanity's view of its own history... if... it is allowed to.

Chevyrov's academic credentials are well known both in science and academia, and are above reproach and thus, create a scenario that demands a certain level of attention. Very few are raising objections because they can't deny their own test results; yet the whole matter is somewhat muted in being publicized. It will be interesting to see what will happen when undoubtedly, more of the conjoining stones are eventually found. The stone is available for study to any qualified persons or party, providing the necessary permits are obtained. Chevyrov's response to all this is, "the more I know, the more I realize I know nothing."

Returning briefly to the discussion of Eden and its importance to the larger question of the Bible's significance to Calvin and thus, (in the overarching context that it being proposed here) in American culture. There is an undetermined period of time between human creation and the point in which Adam and Eve are placed in Eden. The Bible says little about it. But what is reflected in the Bible is fascinating. Ezekiel the prophet has a long discourse where he spiritually compares Lucifer to the King of Tyre. In other words, that earthly king represents a greater spiritual truth. This methodology is used throughout scripture to help the reader understand what is being expressed. It is not difficult to detect metaphor in scripture as it is usually identified as such.

For example, Jesus said over a hundred times, "the Kingdom of heaven is like...." and then he compared a person or thing to it. Ezekiel's lament against the proud and arrogant king of Tyre says that humanity existed in an era of time before Lucifer's rebellion in heaven. Genesis 2:8 says that God "planted a garden, eastward in Eden". East

of where? As the geography is clearly delineated a little later in Genesis 2 by the stipulation of the four headwaters of rivers that flowed out of Eden, (two of which are still there, the Tigris and the Euphrates) the answer to that question can be known. The Garden of Eden was east of what is today, Israel; somewhere in today's southern Iraqi desert or perhaps northern Kuwait. What is called "the Holy Land" today was clearly a geographic epicenter of divine significance before the Garden of Eden ever existed, just as it is today. How long did it take Eden to grow from it's planted and seeded state to maturity? It does not say. It may have been thousands of years or not.

Next, man (Adam and Eve - male and female) are placed in the garden to "keep" it. This marks still another epoch of unknown length; but it is during this period of time (as according to the prophet Ezekiel) that Lucifer appeared in his prior state of moral and ethical perfection as an "anointed Cherub" in the Garden. Ezekiel 28:12-13 says, "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering..." This was before his fall and expulsion from heaven. This would account for Eve's familiarity with him when he did in fact, later tempt her to disobedience. How long did Adam and Eve exist in the Garden in this state of perfection? The Bible does not say once again; but it must be said that the bible's primary function is to prepare humanity for a future outside spacetime, not account for its past within it. But the inference is that while Adam and Eve are in the Garden; humanity outside the garden also flourished in friendship with God. Peace might have reigned on earth for untold ages. It could do so without the possibility of war, famine, or sickness to destroy. Civilization could have reached a place of unimaginable progress. This begs the question then as to why God would "plant a Garden" and put man

in it if things were in such an optimal condition on a planetary scale? Answering this goes back to one of Calvin's principal issue in regard to free will. Outside the Garden, humankind would have enjoyed existence with God in ways that no one could even imagine today. But the potential utopian existence still lacked something profoundly important and significant; in fact, God's stated and overarching reason in creating the universe would have fallen short of his objective and would have remained without its resolution if Eden had not been planted.

Up to this point, though human existence might have been idealistic in every way; humankind enjoyed existence without being given a choice to conform to God's character, ethics, and morality. People lived under God's influence because they had no other option. Humans simply lacked the genetic makeup to "sin". Humankind could no more offend God's holy nature anymore than they could live without breathing. While that may sound good; God did not create humans to exist instinctively as he did the animals. Humans were designed to be independently able to reason and make choices like their creator. Human beings had to have the capacity to choose for themselves whether they would exist with God in friendship. They had to have the ability to adopt God's nature eternally for themselves, not just be born with it.

Eden afforded that possibility of a chosen friendship with God going forward beyond time and space and into eternity.

Eden occupies geographic space that can be identified on a map; but it may not necessarily share spacetime. Eden might well constitute a biblically posited quantum opening between eternity and spacetime. In other words, Eden is a state of being in a

dimension of spirituality (one more akin to eternity than spacetime but isolated from both).

Human assessments of this existence are ethereal, perceiving it as without substance. But Einstein's conceptualism of a 4th dimension can be seen to coalesce with scripture, placing Eden between the theoretical fourth dimension (space) and (time) earth. Eden would then likely be out of phase with the known universe, both spatially and in terms of time. The Garden of Eden exists theoretically as a smaller version of the creation quantum bridge discussed earlier; a portal between the two sides, but it is as much a time as it is a place. If that is true then Eden might theoretically be there right now...in the desert of Iraq. But humanity is out of phase with it and can't see it. If earth, and indeed the entire universe itself, is created as a type of womb for humanity, then there is a much greater reality in eternity than what is known to be known in our dimension of existence; one for which humanity is destined to be birthed into.

In such a place, "being" takes on very different meanings. One might say that a scale model of a car may seem very real. It is exacting in detail and in fact, does have substance as it is comprised of matter; but it's "being" or "reality" is subjective to what is known about the realness of a car's being. It is only assessed by knowing it. If one were to be able to see and "know" the full scale working automobile, upon which the tiny car is modeled; an entirely different idea of "real" ensues.

The bible teaches that there are other beings in eternity just as there are here. How they were created is not known. Perhaps they were created here in space before humanity was. As (the universe) exists as a bubble of space in eternity, these beings can move through it, around it; they can be before it, or after the universe. From inside the bubble,

so to speak, they can't be detected by our three dimensional limitations. However, their movement and activity at times, are evident. They have affect on many things that exist in this dimension. They are biblically identified as angels and later, fallen angels (demons). If Einstein was correct, then there would really be nothing odd about this. To the contrary, it is the people who say there is no such thing as angels and demons that are in fantasyland. Still, all of this conjecture is just one of many possibilities in the unfolding of Genesis.

How long were Adam and Eve in the garden while humankind flourished outside it? (Another biblical gap where time is not measured because it is likely progressing at different rates inside and outside Eden) No sickness, no death, no war. Perhaps millions of years. The bible states that it was long enough for Adam and Even to name, catalogue, and categorize every living thing (plant and animal in existence), including all that existed before the destructive influence of evil; so there might have been thousands of species and subspecies, perhaps millions, that do not exist today. How long would that take?

As Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden; leading to the inevitable consequence of sin (being separated from life, God) these consequences, are instantly posited outside the garden as Eve "chooses" against obeying God. Death, destruction, war, famine, sickness, fell on unsuspecting humanity in a cloudburst of horror and violence that hitherto, are unknown to mankind. Animals, plants, natural environmental conditions outside the Garden descended immediately; changing light to darkness, illumination to ignorance, joy to despair.

In Eden only a few hours pass between the moment of the act of disobedience and the time when God comes in the “cool of the day” saying, “Adam, where art thou?”

But outside Eden, civilization degenerates (perhaps over tens of thousands of years) from a golden age of nearly sharing qualities of divine blessing from God as his friends to the degradation of a stone age, in enmity with him; where even thought and speech itself, is reduced to the most base level. No one knows for sure here either. The point of all this, interesting or ridiculous, depending on one’s point of view, is that the Bible is often wrongly asserted to say that earth is only 6,000 years old.

It may be only 6,000 years old, or it may easily be millions, or perhaps billions - either the way, the bible does not necessarily conflict with science and science does not contradict scripture. The medieval idea that science and the bible are on the same page may finally be well on the way to being proven after all.

VI

Does the Bible have a Divine in its Origin?

“I find more marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatever.”

Sir Isaac Newton

For atheists the answer to the question of the Bible’s divine origin is obvious. Or is it? An atheist would respond based on a presupposition of there being no God. The Bible could not be of divine origin since there is no such thing as divinity. If there would be a case for the Bible having a divine origin then clearly, that would prove the existence of the divine. And no self-respecting atheist would have any of that.

But might an atheist still be a theist incognito? Someone who venerates something with less credibility than the transcendent deity? Atheism may say it does not worship anything; but what is worship? What constitutes meaning of words such as “adoration” or “exultation”? Doesn’t spending more time on something or someone, signify importance over other things or other people ? If money earned represents time invested, which signifies life expended, then is not the object of that earned, invested, expenditure a constituted object of transcendence above other things or people? If a company spends time, money, effort, and deliberation in making and creating technology; might their daily gathering at their lab or research facility demonstrate a type of religious gathering, and their repetitive activities a corporate liturgical act? Aren’t these daily celebrations of signification (going to work and focusing on attaining prioritized accomplishments) in themselves, expressions of a kind of exultation, though no one considers it such? Perhaps or perhaps not. But there can be at least a discussion, if not an argument, that an atheist still “worships” (using this very broad definition of the word), the difference being

“what” she or he worships. It cannot be God because to the atheist there is no God; and secondly, by definition God is above all therefore, the atheist must logically worship something less than God. An atheist is a worshipper of the more common instead of the less sacred. Of course, few if anyone would consider going to work a liturgical exercise; nor would they think an awards ceremony or a bonus check for a job well done are examples of veneration; but that is the point: these kinds of activities and events show a proclivity to sacredtize the rare and distinguish the greater and are celebrated by all humans, whether they believe in God or not. No matter how humanity sees these kinds of practices, they are in fact “religious”, by virtue of their very nature. People’s celebrations and applause may well be focused on an extraordinary achievement that is uncommon to humankind; but however exceptional it might seem, in comparison to “God”, it must by definition be less and therefore, still common.

The atheist then must consequently, worship (celebrate) something less than a transcendent all powerful being; because there can’t be someone or anything more. There can only be someone or something less than God; Something more common than God, but less common than anyone or anything else. Whatever the object of an atheist’s religiously appreciated focus may be, it must be a common thing such as a human being. There are nearly seven billion people on earth, therefore, a human being is a common thing; yet a scientist or philosopher claiming atheism; pours themselves into a human accomplishment to achieve something uncommon, at least uncommon to humanity. They might be investing time, effort, money, or life; all of which are constitutions of celebrations of whatever the time, money, or accomplishments symbolize. The symbols then, whether a technological devise, a cure for a sickness, the chair of the academic

department; a Nobel Prize, or the Oval Office...whatever it is, becomes the object signifying a human achievement. Could that be seen (even if in a distant and removed way) to be type of worship? Again, one might throw up their hands and say, No. That is ridiculous!” We might say that a party to honor a departing colleague; or a dinner to raise awareness for some cause is not worship but only a celebration. But what is a celebration? If it is a ritualistic religious practice it can or might be, a variant of worship as the celebration contains all the same activities that are associated with religious activities held in a “house” of worship. There is standing, sitting, applauding, singing, acknowledgment, recognition, inspiration, judgment, condemnation, exaltation, consumption, reflection, meditation, contemplation; and thus, exultation. And that, is worship. The fact that God may not be the focus of the worship has no bearing on that fact that it still at the least, a variant of worship.

A human accomplishment or endeavor, whether it is finding a cure for the common cold, putting a robot lander on Mars, or inventing the hoverboard for kids to electromagnetically float to school on; causes the human achieving the accomplishment a level of recognition, acclaim, notoriety, or fame. Perhaps the honoring of this person attaining the notable goal takes the form of money awarded. But regardless, the recognition the achievement wins, still rings with a distant sociological correlation of a tribal sacrifice of a chicken to the idol with jewels for its eyes to express appreciation for a good crop. Distant as it may seem, there is a connectivity between an aboriginal dance honoring a new chief in the Australian outback and an inaugural ball honoring a new Commander in Chief in Washington, D.C.

The point being made is this? Being human means to somehow be configured to celebrate what is beyond his or her own being. An acknowledgment of something less than transcendence is still an expressive acknowledgement of the uncommon even though it is more common than God. And therefore, a celebration, distant though it may seem, is a type of veneration. And no matter what anyone says, there will be some kind of gratuitous expression of veneration or celebration in everyone's life.

A businessman closes a sale and celebrates by having a drink at a bar. He is "worshipping" in a sense, (although no one would call it that) what his own accomplishment means to him. The drink is the symbol of the accomplishment being celebrated. But though the accomplishment is no longer above or beyond it still a celebration of what had been above and beyond him. The accomplishment (symbolized by the drink) is what is actually being celebrated. The symbolic drink then becomes the signifier that something uncommon and beyond has been attained or achieved. The drink is the symbol of the conquest of the uncommon. It is an act of self celebrating. While few would label that a form of worship; from a purely theological perspective it qualifies..

An evidence that there has been worship of the uncommon or beyond is demonstrated in the realization that once a person has in fact "done it", there is an immediate sense of "What's next?" that seems to surface.

There is always a need for more, or greater, or beyond. And what is being asserted here is that this is biblically at least theologically described, as a need to worship the God that created humanity for that very purpose. To balance that comment, atheists would argue that a human contrived Bible exists to fulfill a sociological void and nothing more.

Both Calvin and Luther rejected the doctrine of “Transubstantiation” (the sacramental communion wine literally becomes the blood of Christ and the host becomes the body of Christ at the moment of consumption). Instead, Calvin and Luther believed those “elements” are symbols of Christ’s body and blood. The symbols are not being worshipped; but rather they are signifiers of an accomplishment of the uncommon: Jesus Christ. And it is he, that is actually being worshipped via the symbols.

“When Calvin calls the eucharist the body and blood of Christ, he is speaking figuratively because any other usage is impossible for him, calling the sign by the name of the thing signified...Since the humanity of Christ is at the right hand of God and since this local presence cannot be overcome, even by the omnipotent will of God, the bread and the wine are and must remain nothing more than empty signs of an absent body and blood.”⁹³

Accomplishments are an outgrowth of work, time, and effort spawned from an inner intellectualization symbolized by celebrations that are religious in their expressivities. Therefore, humanity can often consequently worship themselves by the celebration of their own accomplishments that are symbolized by events, ceremonies, awards, or money. It does not matter that they don’t see it that way. From an anthropological perspective, it still is. People who seem never to want to celebrate anything have their own personal and private ways of celebrating, or at least remembering.

Franz Boas, the acknowledged *Father of Anthropology*, points out, “It may also happen that certain ideas of primitive man, which from our standpoint, would have to be considered as religious in character, are interpreted by the world holding them as purely

⁹³ David Curtis Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 175.

rationalistic.”⁹⁴ The point being, rational thought and religious practice are linked and often indistinguishable from one another. The fact that most people would not associate a human practice of celebration with worship does not mean that it isn’t an expression of worship. The signifiers, the ritualism, the practices, all have religious overtones, even when expressed by atheists.

Humankind will inevitably and consequently worship. They will either worship a transcendent, all powerful creator or something less; something that represents a lesser transcendence specific to them.

In the case of the former, it stands to reason that an all powerful God who has created humankind for a divine purpose would find a way to divinely divulge that purpose to the creation that has been divinely created.

The last chapter attempted to demonstrate how the Bible is different from other religious texts in the sense that in the west, especially America, it is enmeshed with the societal fabric of the culture itself. Point being illuminated: if western civilization revolves around the Bible, whether masked, distorted, or layered in and societally conceptualized; then it is still profoundly influential and thus, very different from any other text, religious or historical in Europe and the United States.

There is an ongoing societal engagement with the Bible and with Jesus at its vortex, who represents the uncommon (God). Jesus is the object of (Evangelical) America’s worship. And while Jewish celebrants of worship may not believe he is the messiah, the fact that American Christian evangelicals visiting the Holy Land represent one of the greatest segments of the Israeli economy in tourism, compels Jews, even the

⁹⁴ Franz Boas, *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911*, midway reprint ed., ed. George W. Stocking (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 1974), 258.

ones who reject Jesus as the Messiah, to acknowledge his importance by virtue of promoting Christian tourism in Israel. While Zionists may reject Jesus as the Messiah; Israelis in general, don't bar Christian pilgrims from coming to Israel. They instead, encourage the building of hotels to house them, supervise tours of the Holy Land, arrange security for them; and more. Not only do evangelical Christians constitute a mainstay of the Israeli economy; it is this same evangelical Christian political clout that affords Israel the lion's share of its support from the United States. And that support is the propelling agent in the Trump administration's 2017 decision to move the United States' embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Even the calendar used by western civilization is organized and calibrated around the life of Jesus. In recent decades secularism has tried to take Jesus out of it by replacing B.C. (before Christ) and A. D. Anno Domini (in the year of our Lord) with B.C.E and C.E. (before the common era and common era respectively) But what constitutes the commonality between the eras?

Another common denominator between Catholics, Luther, and Calvin is recognition of the Bible's divine origin. And for Calvin, that divine origin is arguably a biblically based, social justification for political action. But regardless of whether one accepts that statement, "there is common agreement among Calvin and subsequent 'Calvinists' that scripture is to be regarded as the *principium cognoscendi* (principal of knowing) or final norm of theology."⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Mark Husbands.. "Calvin and the Revelation of God in Creation and Scripture." *Calvin's Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments, and New Possibilities*, edited by J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink, Westminster John Knox P, 2012, p. 26.

Secularism must necessarily, reject the divine origin of the Bible. Why? Not because of pluralism or fairness to other religious texts, or even the need to give equal consideration to other traditions; and not, as it will be demonstrated presently, because the Bible lacks historical viability or incompatibility with science. Again, no one wants to be told they are wrong. And no one wants to be told that what they believe or practice is not good. And it is this sticky wicket that spawns America's frustration with Christianity and the Bible, causing it to crescendo.

But once more, to maintain the overarching context of what is being discussed and argued here: That Europe, and even more America, is significantly influenced by Calvin or at least a distortion of his theology, then a further discussion of the Bible is warranted as America and the Bible, for better or worse, are still very much engaged with one another.

Therefore, the final piece of this writing devotes itself to the questions relating to why the Bible was believed by Calvin, Luther and by so many people today, as having a divine origin. There is a case for its historicity, yet to be objective, it bears repeating that while there may be militant and anti religious views in secularism, science, and atheism that *seem* bent on discrediting the Bible and or Christians; it simply must be said again, that there are many more scientists, historians, archaeologists, and competent scholars in many disciplines that have argued a conventional wisdom downplaying biblical historicity that are simply taking the positions they have taken because the studies they have made, the discoveries found, the tests that have been run have painted a specific picture. There is no conspiracy to prove the bible wrong. These people don't hate Christianity. They are not bent on being atheists. They would be delighted to meet a

transcendent God. Up to know they just have not had the privilege. For example, one of the most famous stories in the Bible is the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan after returning from Egypt via forty years spent wandering the Sinai. They crossed the Jordan river to encounter the ancient fortified city of Jericho. Two spies were sent to recon the city and we're helped by a prostitute that lowered them over the city walls with a scarlet colored rope to keep them from arrest and execution. The story goes that ultimately God miraculously caused the massive walls to collapse, allowing Jericho to be taken by Israel. For her kindness, Rahab the prostitute and her entire family were spared. She was allowed to keep her home which was not destroyed in the invasion, and she was actually granted citizenship in the new Israel. All of the wonderful tropes of the story show God's love and faithfulness to Israel and to those who are willing to help Israel. But what about the science behind the story? Archeologists have swarmed the area for a hundred years. What have their excavations and evaluations concluded? The real answer is a mixture of opinions. There are many things that line up with the biblical account and some that so far, have not. The point is, science is not always out to discredit the Bible, it simply asserts a truth based on the facts that have been uncovered to date. In 2001, Israel Finkelstein, an Israeli archaeologist and Neil Asher Silberman, Anthropologist and archaeologist from the University of Amherst, published a book entitled, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. They don't seem to have a bias one way or the other about the Bible's accuracy and exemplify the more conventional scholarship that has been in play for over a century. Their overarching perspective is summarized in this paragraph,

In a few cases, inscriptions and signet seals have been discovered that can be directly connected with individuals mentioned in the biblical text. But

that is not to say that archaeology has proved the biblical narrative to be true in all of its details. Far from it: it is now evident that many events of biblical history did not take place in either the particular era or the manner described. Some of the most famous events in the Bible clearly never happened at all.⁹⁶

But there are many definitive literary and historical correlations between what one might call, objective science, and the Bible. Consider the basic historicity of the Bible.

Plato once said, “Τέφρη τῷ γὰρ ἀληθεῖ χαλεπαίνειν οὐ θέμις. Τοὺς αὐτὸ ἄρα ἕκαστον τὸ ὄν ἀσπαζομένους φιλοσόφους ἀλλ’ οὐ φιλοδόξους κλητέον; Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν.”⁹⁷ (No man should be angry at what is true. But those who love the truth in each thing are to be called lovers of wisdom and not lovers of opinion. Assuredly.)

This truth about truth is noteworthy because there is virtually no controversy in European or American society about whether Plato actually wrote this. And this discussion is not to challenge the authorship of Plato; but to ask: upon what scholarship does society have such confidence? After all, the oldest copies of Platonic writings were copied nearly fifteen hundred years after Plato lived. And how many times were his writings copied during this millennium and a half? And copied by whom? Under what conditions? Very few of these questions can be answered; yet when a quote like this one is inserted at the end of a film to make a point, no one throws up their hands and yells across a crowded theater, “That’s ridiculous! No one can prove historically that Plato said that!” If a quote like this is posted to social media and credited to Plato, no one takes

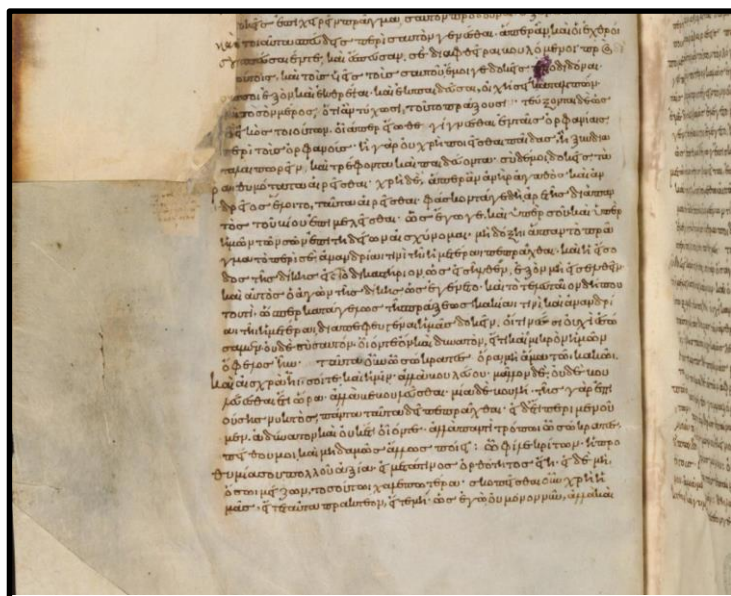
⁹⁶ Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 5.

⁹⁷ Plato *Politeia: Who is a Philosopher* 479d-480a, translated by B. Jowett.

issue. (Nor should they). In all likelihood Plato did say what is attributed to him for a number of historical and scholarly reasons; many of those reasons are the same ones that substantiate the historicity of the Bible, which is the point.

In America today, in contrast with Plato, if someone quotes Jesus or a quotation from the Bible (whether its quoted in context to not), it is not unusual for a question to be raised about the Bible as a viable source of history. One is likely to hear a range of barbed explicatives. “The Bible is full of contradictions”. “The Bible is completely distorted from thousands of years of being copied by bigoted religious people”; etc etc. And these *strawman* examples are inserted here to help the reader envision in a generalized way, how American society responds to the Bible verses in distinction to other ancient writings of antiquity. For example, the work just cited as being written by Plato is not the oldest copy of a manuscript attributed to Plato (meaning it is less likely to be an accurate portrayal of Plato as it has been subjected to more time and the likely errors that are almost evitable distortions of being copied from an older manuscript). Plato lived in the third century B.C.E.

and no known original works have been found written in his hand to date. As an older copy of a manuscript is less likely to be erroneously copied, is closer to the time of the author, it is thus, much more likely to be an accurate Consider this copy of Plato. (right)



A writer named Johannes of Constantinople made a copy of an older copy that no longer exists, which would eventually be called the "Clarke Plato".

The work was commissioned for a man named Arethas of Patrae who would eventually become the Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, which is in Turkey. "The cost was 21 nomismata, or gold coins, for the copying and the parchment. Completed in November 895, this is the oldest surviving manuscript of Plato's *Tetraologies 1-6* (*Euthyphro-Meno*), with some scholia. The scribe Johannes wrote out the text. Arethas and other contemporaries added scholia in uncial."⁹⁸ Centuries later it was purchased by a monastery, and ultimately sold again in the early nineteenth century to a man named E.D. Clark who finally donated it to the Bodleian Library at Oxford University in England where it can be seen today.

The point here is not to question the authenticity of the Clark Plato; (nor is it really to defend the historical authenticity of the Bible, directly) but returning to the now familiar theme of a twisted Calvinism influencing thought in western society, it is to note a possible, or at least seeming double standard that has made those of us who live in America think as we do when confronted with the Bible. What is being argued here is these distorted Calvinistic influences (a perverted theological one ironically) is being used to discredit the historical validity of the Bible in western society and particularly, in American culture. Do most graduate students in history think the Bible is a primary source for history. No, they don't. But why? From where have they gotten that perspective? How rational is that view? What are the facts about the Bible as history?

⁹⁸ Richard William Hunt, *The Survival of Ancient Literature: Catalogue of an Exhibition of Greek and Latin Classical Manuscripts Mainly from Oxford Libraries Displayed On the Occasion of the Triennial Meeting of the Hellenic and Roman Societies, 28 July-2* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1975), 56.

Theologian and Historian, Kenneth Boa (holding both a PhD from New York University and a DPhil from Oxford University) recently gave an interview to Bible.org, (a Christian website devoted to Christian apologetics) discussing some of these very questions. He comments that,

Many people are of the opinion that the teachings of the Bible are outdated, contradictory, and full of scientific and historical errors. With few exceptions, they have reached these conclusions through second and third hand sources.

- The Bible says that God helps those who help themselves
- The books of the New Testament were written centuries after the events they describe
- Cleanliness is next to godliness is in the Bible
- According to the Bible, the earth is flat
- The earliest New Testament manuscripts go back only to the fourth or fifth centuries A.D.
- The Bible teaches that the earth is the center of the universe
- The English Bible is a translation of a translation of a translation (etc.) of the original, and fresh errors were introduced in each stage of the process⁹⁹

The interview continues to discuss the means by which historically biblical accuracy is derived and affirmed. Those scholarly means will be applied here to briefly contrast the Bible with the aforementioned, oldest (and hence more likely to be accurate), manuscript of Plato (and the other works attributed to him). Again, this is not intended to negatively critique the scholarly process used to determine whether Plato's work is historically authentic by any means, as it is virtually the same process used to determine the Bible's. Rather it is to show that a historian who is willing to accept Platonian scholarship should rationally have no issue with accepting the historicity of the Bible, at least in a broad sense.

⁹⁹ Kenneth Boa, "How Accurate is the Bible?," Bible.org, <https://bible.org/article/how-accurate-bible> (accessed January 12, 2018).

Here's how Plato and the Bible stack up against one another in terms of bibliographic historical viability:

Historical Work / Source	Date(s) Written	Oldest Copy of Original	Time Between Original & Copy	Num of Copies of Original
Plato	427-327 B.C.E.	895 C.E.	1200 years*	250*
The Bible	1600 B.C.E-90 C.E.*	90-100 C.E.*	20-30 years*	5,200* *Approx

Note: Not only is the period between the original writing and the latest copy significant; but also the number of copies of the original that can be compared with each other that makes a copy more or less, credible as a historical source.

As the oldest existing copy of Plato was copied 1200 years after it was originally written and the oldest copy of a Biblical work has been determined to have been written as little as 20-30 years after the original; it should be considered as viable historically.

Boa says there is a historical test available to biblical scholarship that other writings of other classical authors can't use often. That is an internal test. What does the Bible say about itself? In this case, it is not circular reasoning to use this test in the Bible as it is not one book but sixty six; with at least forty people (not including scribes and assistants) writing over nearly seventeen hundred years of history. Therefore, one can actually assess what different writers were saying about what had been written before them on many of the the same subjects. For example, Jesus constantly quoted the Old Testament as "God's Word". Boa makes another point about the New Testament.

The independent eyewitness accounts in the New Testament of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ were written by people who were intimately acquainted with Jesus Christ. Their gospels and epistles reveal their integrity and complete commitment to the truth, and they maintained their testimony even through persecution and martyrdom. All the evidence

inside and outside the New Testament runs contrary to the claim made by form criticism that the early church distorted the life and teachings of Christ. Most of the New Testament was written between A.D. 47 and 70, and all of it was complete before the end of the first century. There simply was not enough time for myths about Christ to be created and propagated. And the multitudes of eyewitnesses who were alive when the New Testament books began to be circulated would have challenged blatant historical fabrications about the life of Christ.¹⁰⁰

Of course, myths can evolve quickly and it could be argued that the eyewitness accounts were not really independent. But Boa's perspective is noted. For some, the Bible is a "religious text" only. And anything that smacks of history in the Bible is a fabrication of myth, legend, metaphor, and pseudo history at best. Clearly Calvin and Luther felt differently, but nonetheless, how accurate is this generalized contemporary cultural assessment? How does history in the Bible compare and contrast with what archeology has uncovered in artifacts and non-biblical historical texts?

In 2008 Professor Larry McKinney, of Central Baptist Theological Seminary (Kansas); Dan Master, Assistant Professor of Archaeology, Wheaton College (Illinois), Dr. John Monson, Assistant Professor of Archaeology, Wheaton College (Illinois) initiated a study to objectively evaluate whether history in scripture could be affirmed by historical truth proven by today's archeology. Their published work is insightful. The study was focused, not so much on well known historical events or famous historical characters, (although that is part of it) but more on seemingly mundane and random historical claims made in the Bible in the context of those more historically well known people and events. The conceptualism is centered on the more ambiguous factoids of lesser known people and events who may lived in the service of some of more famous historical characters to determine whether there is a historical correlation. This step was achieved by a search of archival data on archeological digs and discoveries, (older ones

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

and contemporary ones), to see if any of these seemingly, random historical claims made in the Bible had any chance of being verified by archeology or non-biblical historical facts.

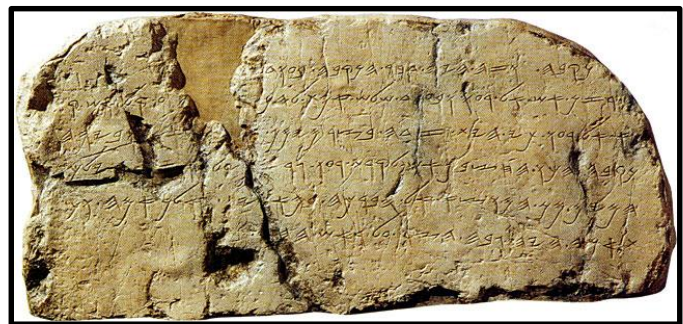
Dozens of people, places, things, events were assessed. Here is a sampling. There has never been much of doubt historically, that there was Judean king named Hezekiah. The Bible lists, as one of his greatest accomplishments, a monumental engineering project to dig a tunnel and bring fresh water into Jerusalem. Yet Hezekiah's involvement could not be confirmed by archeology for a long while. The biblical record states the following:

“The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his might and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?” (2 Kings 20:20)

Although this was a huge civil service project for Jerusalem at that time, it is a mere footnote in the big scheme of history. Hezekiah and his reign, thwarting invaders and so forth, are well known historical facts that were affirmed by archeology as real people of history early on in the region (meaning the eighteenth and nineteenth century). And there was indeed, a huge water conduit that ended in the pool of Siloam in Jerusalem has been there dating back as far as one could know. Yet for the better part of a century, there was no archeological evidence to suggest that Hezekiah built it. For such a large project, it was believed that something should have surfaced to confirm the identity of the king at the time of construction. These kinds of things were usually attributed in ancient times as they are today when a cornerstone or plaque is dedicated. If this large public works project that is recorded in the Bible was not built by Hezekiah then the narrative

would indeed feed into the idea that if this significant fact is in error, then the Bible's many historical details are as many Americans believe them to be: at best embellishments and exaggerations. And if that is the case then the Bible simply can not be used in a historical sense at all. The Bible would indeed be nothing more than a religious text with many likely contradictions and errors. However, some children were playing in the south end of the tunnel on a hot day in 1880 and came across an inscription on a stone that turned out to be 1.32 meters wide and 0.21 meters high describing the digging of the conduit from both ends and meeting in the middle. While Hezekiah is still not mentioned by name; countless studies and tests on the stone, considering the writing itself, and many other factors, place the date of the inscription between 708 B.C.E. and not later than 700 B.C.E. Very specific dates of Hezekiah's reign are historically known from non-biblical records uncovered through archaeology to have begun in 727 B.C.E and ending in 698 B.C.E. Thus, the historical claim of the Bible about Hezekiah building the tunnel is spot on.

While this seemingly miniscule affirmation may appear insignificant to the layman; the historian realizes that much of known history is a mosaic of such factoids; piecemealed together to create a tapestry of

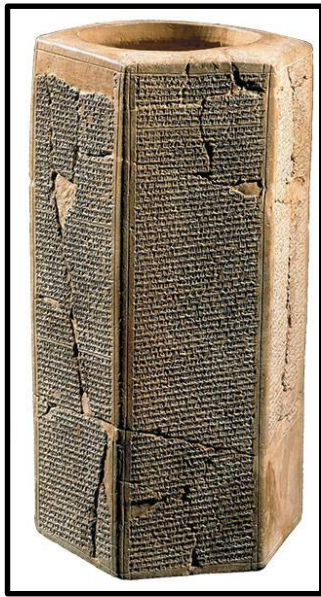


The Siloam Inscription

historicity. The Siloam inscription is on display at the Archeological Museum in Istanbul.

Another example is found in 2 Chronicles 32. The biblical narrative states that Sennacherib invaded Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem but ultimately was unsuccessful in

taking the city. This would be a correlating challenge to confirm the Bible's history through archeology because archeology would have to first demonstrate evidence that Sennacherib attacked Judah, yet not be successful in conquering Jerusalem, in order to be in sync with the Bible. A military failure was not something ancient kings or generals usually wanted to record, especially if the the failure was their own.



But an 1830 archeological dig in Iraq, near the modern city of Mosle, gave up a hexagon shaped stone later named The Taylor Prism, (left) for its discoverer, Colonel R. Taylor, British Consul General at Baghdad, at the time. It confirms the biblical record of Hezekiah's reign at the very time of the invasion and the siege.

On the prism is a record of Sennacherib boasting of the smaller cities and villages of Judah that he took for spoil; but though he had Hezekiah and Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage" Hezekiah "could not be brought under my yoke." The Taylor Prism was acquired in Baghdad in 1919 by the Oriental Institute of Chicago and is available there for study.

The last quarter-century have yielded over 200 such examples. Lawrence Mykytiuk, Associate Professor of Library Science and the History, American Studies, Classical Studies, and Bible librarian at Purdue University holds a Ph.D. in Hebrew and Semitic Studies and has written a book entitled *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200–539 B.C.E.* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

In 2014 he wrote a summary of more recent archaeological finds for Biblical Archeology Review that substantiate and cooborate the viability of the historical claims in the Bible. In the article he cites fifty direct evidences of biblical historicity validated

independently by archeology. For example, the Biblical narrative about the life of King David is one of the best known biblical stories. American culture has it so enmeshed with both thought and language that the David and Goliath story is compared to the underdog against the much larger and more powerful adversary in American society when any single person or a small entity takes a stand against a more powerful one.

Yet as recently as the 1990's archeology did not have corroborating piece of archeological evidence had ever been unearthed to say that David was a even a real person let alone the most famous king of Israel.

Some scholars had come “to doubt his very existence. According to this speculation David was either a shadowy, perhaps mythical, ancestor or a literary creation of later Biblical authors and editors. In 1993, however, the now-famous Tel Dan inscription was found in an excavation led by Avraham Biran. Actually, it was the team’s surveyor, Gila Cook, who noticed the inscription on a basalt stone in secondary use in the lower part of a wall. Written in ninth-century B.C.E. Aramaic, it was part of a victory stele commissioned by a non-Israelite king mentioning his victory over “the king of Israel” and the “House of David.” Whether or not the foreign king’s claim to victory was true, it is clear that a century after he had died, David was still remembered as the founder of a dynasty.¹⁰¹



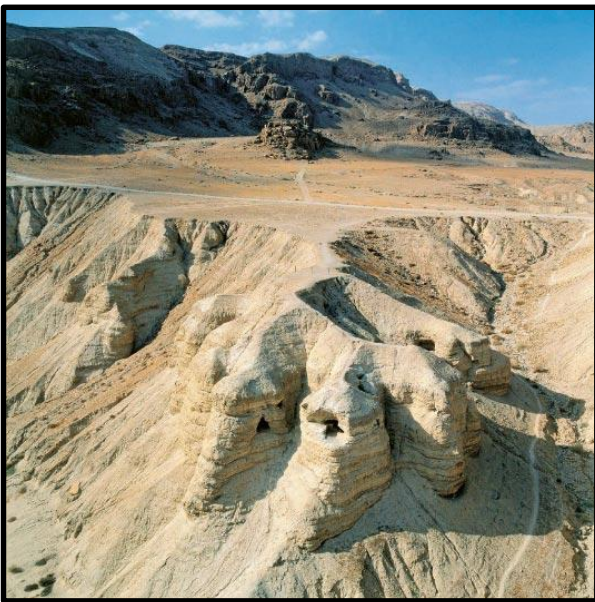
Tel Dan Inscription

While this still does not unequivocally prove David was not a myth; there can certainly be a discussion about his existence with some archaeological evidence to consider.

William Stacey Johnson’s more recent scholarship *John Calvin, Reformer For the 21st Century* points out that Calvin and his reformers went a step further than just arguing that Scripture is authoritative, “but that it is the preeminent authority in the

¹⁰¹ Lawrence Mykytiuk, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 40, no. 2 (2014): 42–45, 48–50.

church concerning all matters of faith and practice. While the Catholic Church maintained that Scripture and Church tradition were equal authorities, the Reformers insisted on the principal of Scripture alone.”¹⁰² Johnson observes that the Bible in contemporary times is often taken for granted as a single volume but Scripture’s distinctiveness was punctuated vividly in ancient times as each writing was a separate scroll and not assembled as sixty-six books into one. The sits the stage to mention the



most famous crossover connecting the possible divine origins of the Bible, with both archeology and history as disciplines of the sciences. Qumran, Judean desert 1947: A bedouin shepherd boy leaves his flock to scurry up a steep hill to peer into the entrance of a cave. Fearing to enter, he tosses a rock into the darkness to here it strike and breaks something that sounded like glass. The breaking glass was an earthen pot holding an ancient scroll. The first of hundreds of such scrolls to be discovered in many caves in the area.

Eventually there are thousands of writings found. They are written for the most part in Hebrew, containing nearly all of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) plus a host of commentaries and supporting documentation that were likely left there by the Essenes (a monastic Jewish sect). They become known as *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, most of which were written between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. The importance of a find like this cannot be overstated in terms of archeology and history. The cultural relevance of the

¹⁰² William Stacy Johnson, *John Calvin, Reformer for the 21st Century* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 31.

Dead Sea Scrolls to the State of Israel was so profound that a Museum called the *Shrine of the Book* was constructed in Jerusalem to house and display them. So valuable are they to Israel that in the case of an attack the scrolls automatically lower into a vault that is capable of surviving an atomic bomb exploding at point blank range. A scroll (*below*) is from the Ten Commandments.



“I am the Lord your God who took you out of the Land of Egypt out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods but me.”
 (Deuteronomy 5:6, 7 *The Dead Sea Scrolls*)

Of all the scholarship, testing, evaluations, considerations, postulations, and speculations over the prevailing decades since the *Dead Sea Scrolls* were discovered, perhaps the most significant and singularly overarching truth to be realized about them is that when you unroll a scroll from 100 B.C.E. and translate the Hebrew into English; then compare it to an open copy of the Bible from the twenty-first century. There are grammatical and literary distinctions (many of which have to do with translation) but as a whole the original text reads today as it did over two thousand years. Consider the significance of this! An unknown number of people have copied copies, of copies, of copies, of copies. They have done it in the most adverse conditions from deserts to prisons cells; from valleys to mountaintops. Arabia, Persia, Egypt, Gaul, and Britannia,

The Greeks, the Romans, the Jews, the Christians, the Catholics, the Protestants, the Calvinists, the British, and the Americans...all have had a hand (actually millions of hands) in passing it on. And through all of the centuries and seasons; what might the odds be if one could calculate them, that there would not be a distortion, degradation, or flaw showing up in the Bible today that does not match up with the scrolls of over two millennia ago? One mathematician once calculated the number of prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah's sacrifice and compared them to the single day of Jesus' crucifixion. The question was what would be the mathematical odds (in terms of probability) that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about his crucifixion that he did on that single day by coincidence? That all of the people, circumstances, and events that led to Jesus death on the cross just came together in a prophetic perfect storm to coincidentally fulfill the twenty eight Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah's death?

The answer was expressed this way. Cover the state of Texas with silver dollars, six inches deep, marking one coin and placing it anywhere in the state. Then tell someone to go anywhere in Texas, bend down and pick up one coin. How likely is it that the coin they choose will be the one marked? These odds show the magnitude in probability that Jesus was not the Messiah foretold by the Torah. But the Dead Sea Scrolls are not an exercise of probability about the events of one single day. They are tangible works of antiquity studied by archeology and every related discipline for three quarters of a century. They have survived for two millennia, covering sixteen hundred years of history, not a single day. With that many human beings in play with different skills, motives, agendas, education levels, over that long of a time, in that many places: what would the

odds be that the Bible of two thousand years ago would have survived intact to be the same Bible today? The numbers of probability are such that a person of non belief may require more faith to believe in their unbelief than a believer in a transcendent God needs to believe that the scriptures are not only divinely inspired, but divinely protected and preserved. Some elements of atheism in America may continue to refute the historical viability of the Bible, yet every year that passes, archeological finds are made, papers are published, and evidences are surfacing that demonstrate the credibility of the Bible as a historically reliable primary source document. Much more could be said and other evidences presented but perhaps in the context of this writing it is best to move toward a conclusion.

Summarizations and Culminations

One might well follow threads from societal behaviors back to many likely origins in a culture such as in America. One could make the case that it was the mixing of so many ideas and paradigms that resulted in the odd montage of often conflicted perspective that seems to prevail there. And both of these strategies are most certainly going to yield a harvest of truths to western civilization about their own intellectualizations. And even in these summary questions, one might still see a luminescent thread interweaved in the sociological ball of yarn, that if untangled might well be followed back to tip of Calvin's quill as it dipped into the ink to unknowingly compose a Genesis of Postmodernism. For Calvin's ideas, while Christian and theological, are not just about God or God's desire for humanity; they are about authority, justification, permission giving, and governance. While Jesus Christ was at the forefront of Calvin's thoughts as he wrote and spoke, what has also survived and mutated are the entangled concepts of legalizations in thought. These have fed the fire of culture in today's confused America.

In January 2018, at the entertainment industry's Golden Globe award ceremony; Oprah Winfrey parroted what might be posited as a Calvinistic *postmodernism* about truth. One that is commonly expressed by many contemporary aspiring celebrity culture makers in America today.

I'd like to thank the Hollywood Foreign Press Association. (An American non-profit organization that founded the Golden Globes; comprised of 90 non-American journalists) Because we all know that the press is under siege these days. But we also know that it is the insatiable dedication to uncovering the absolute truth that keeps us from turning a blind eye to corruption and injustice. To tyrants and victims and secrets and lies; I want to say that I value the press more than ever before as we try to navigate

these complicated times, which brings me to this: what I know for sure; is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have.¹⁰³

Consider in one brief paragraph that Winfrey asserts that “we all know the press is under siege (apparently referencing the president’s fake news allegation: that the press sensationalizes stories to make them more dramatic in favor of a more socialistic cultural bias and more importantly, to frame distinctive views in a lens that either questions the propagator’s integrity or intelligence), and to affirm their “insatiable dedication” to uncover “the absolute truth”. But note what follows, “that keeps us from turning a blind eye to corruption and injustice”. The absolute truth Winfrey refers to is, arguably not a single truth that distinguishes right or wrong, white or black; but one that *absolutely keeps us from turning a blind eye to corruption and injustice*. The objective is not truth but rather the absolute certainty of preserving a specific view of a perceived truth that is preferred. And what constitutes the corruption and injustice Winfrey is referencing; and who are the “us” she refers to? With respect to injustice she might have been referring the Trump administration’s immigration policy or the alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 election. It is not really clear; but the issue in question is how far of a stretch is it to connect Winfrey’s political swipes in the twenty first century to the puritanical posits of the seventeenth century? Some historians might immediately declare there is no connection at all. Winfrey’s views are based on her worldview emanating from the bigoted and unjust treatments she received and witnessed in her youth and that’s as far as it goes. Without a doubt these terrible things influence her thinking; but there is more. She continues, “what I know for sure, is that speaking your truth is the most powerful truth we have.” Certainly she has a point. Perception is a type of reality. Believing that

¹⁰³ Oprah Winfrey, “Acceptance Speech at the 2018 Golden Globe Awards” (video), January 7, 2018, 2:58, <https://www.goldenglobes.com/> (accessed February 19, 2018).

something is true, can make it true up to a point in people's thinking. Of course, there are limits. Declaring that one can fly can be a belief that many people can embrace and hold dear as they might survey the heavens and dream of soaring like an eagle. And if the community believes something, it can take on a reality of its own and actually become a perceived truth. Yet if all those being told they are birds try to fly by jumping off a cliff together the perceived truth of the majority will rapidly lose its luster.

So what does Winfrey mean by "your truth"? Clearly, she means one's perception of right as it is being defined by *her* community. The truth of *her* settlement (to express it in the terms of the Puritans), one that affords a shelter from the wilderness of the frontier of death, fear, and the unknown. This idea of a subjective truth is very distant from Jesus' teaching when he said, "I am the way, *the truth*, and the life." (John 14:6) Back in 2013, Oprah made the following comment in an interview she gave to the BBC, "There are still generations of people, older people; born, and bred, and marinated in it, (racial bigotry against African Americans) in that prejudice and racism. And they just have to die."¹⁰⁴ She likely did not mean that she wanted these people rounded up and executed, but that they would need to pass off the scene before the world of non racism will be possible. These people are not part of the elect. Their deaths, by natural causes or not, very much sounds like the intolerance of the Puritans who made very similar claims. But something or someone somehow makes America think as it does. And true enough, there may be many streams flowing into the sea; but then there are Mississippi's and Missouri's that are just more significant. These connections between people having to die to bring about the desired change in society...they are not new; but again, if life can be viewed through a

¹⁰⁴ Oprah Winfrey, "Oprah Winfrey: The Butler, Racism, and Obama (interview with the BBC)" (video), November 13, 2013, 3:14, <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/entertainment-arts-24934979/oprah-winfrey-the-butler-racism-and-obama> (accessed February 19, 2018).

confused Calvinistic lens, there is moral justification behind the call for the death penalty among those who claim to be against it. There is ethical high ground for discrimination and marginalization by virtue of it serving the greater good as determined by “us” the settlement on the new frontier.

What is the real point with all this? Is it to simply demonstrate a historical viability of the Bible? Is it to demonstrate Calvin’s rationale for using scripture to justify social reform that often finds itself in conflict with the overall tone of Christ? Is it only to show how Calvin’s conflicted ideology has strayed further and further from the original tangent of God truth and love, to leave American culture in its current state of having as its metanarrative, one that is really without a story at all? Perhaps all of these. Yet the real underlying purpose here might be to express the hope that every person secretly hopes for (atheist or deist) that there really is someone out there who really cares; someone who loves humanity; someone who has the authority and the will to right wrongs and bring a justice to humankind. A justice that is tempered in mercy and guided by love.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son; that whoever believes in him will not perish but find eternal life.” (John 3:16)

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